




3 1761 11631122 6



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116311226>

CAZON
X1
-D23

Gouvernement
Publications



No. 46

N° 46

ISSN 1180-2987



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

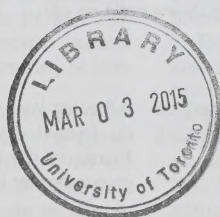
Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 23 February 2015

Lundi 23 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 23 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 23 février 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: As you know, this is Black History Month in the province of Ontario. Today, we have 300 black students from across the greater Toronto area here for their 10th annual Canadian Black Caucus day at Queen's Park. The theme is Inspiring Youth Politically, and I'd like to welcome all 300 students and Gwyn Chapman, who is the president of the Canadian Black Caucus.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce in the members' gallery Simon Giannini, a good friend. Happy to have you here today, Simon.

Hon. David Zimmer: St. Agnes Catholic School is in my riding, and today I want to welcome Ms. Lavery's grade 4 and grade 5 students, along with their principal, Mr. Shea. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Susan Christianson and Jesse and Joel Britton. I'd just like to point out that Joel is 10 years old and has taken a keen interest in politics. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce three very special guests who are here with me in the House today: in the east gallery, my parents, José and Arminda Bento, and the smartest 10-year-old that I know, my son André.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today a very good friend down at the ROMA conference, along with many other fine municipal leaders: The mayor of Carleton Place, Louis Antonakos, is joining us here today.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to welcome two post-secondary co-op students who are here with us today. Patty Chang and Aaron Lau are both working on the ministry's Student Voice initiative. Student Voice is a great initiative that allows Ontario students to have a voice in their learning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to welcome, in the members' west gallery here at Queen's Park today, the mayor of Bracebridge, Mr. Graydon Smith, and the deputy mayor, Mr. Rick Maloney. They are down here for the ROMA/OGRA conference.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us today in the east gallery are students from Victoria Park Collegiate Institute, my former school. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming Megan McLean, the mother of our page captain today, Natalie McLean. Welcome to Queen's Park. We really enjoy having Natalie as our captain and our page in our sessions today.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like to welcome to the House today Adam Nowina, a great supporter and a great constituent in Etobicoke Centre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the House, up in the members' gallery, two students from the University of Akron's Canadian studies work experience program. Please join me in welcoming Jermaine Collins and Emily Maher as they begin their 10-week placement with the member from Halton and the member from London—Fanshawe. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Gerry Lougheed Jr., chair of the Sudbury police services board, told Mr. Olivier, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier." Then he allegedly offered him a government job to step aside as a candidate. But in January, your spokeswoman said, "Gerry Lougheed is not government or Liberal Party staff. He speaks for himself."

Premier, given that Mr. Lougheed is not a government employee or a Liberal Party staffer, where did he get the authority to offer Mr. Olivier a job? Did you give it to him?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, and as I said in a statement on Friday, we reached out—I reached out—to Andrew Olivier. Just to remind the member opposite, I didn't have to have a conversation with Andrew Olivier. I had a conversation with our past candidate because I wanted to make sure he understood that I knew it was a difficult moment that he wasn't going to be the candidate in the Sudbury by-election and we wanted to find ways for him to stay involved, if that's what he chose to do. We wanted to make some suggestions about ways that he could be involved, in the same way that I hope any leader would want to keep a past candidate involved in the party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The official opposition and the NDP directly mentioned Gerry Lougheed's involvement in Wynnagate 43 times during

question period last week. The government mentioned him only once. And, Premier, since the Chief Electoral Officer's report was made public last Thursday, Mr. Loughheed Jr. has not been mentioned at all by your government. You've gone silent on Mr. Loughheed.

Premier, you said Pat Sorbara will step down if charges are laid. Will you ask Gerry Loughheed Jr. to do the same if charged?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite well knows, Gerry Loughheed Jr. is not a member of my staff. I have taken, and I do take, this matter very, very seriously; I've said that repeatedly. I understand that it is extremely important that, when there are allegations, we take them seriously and we answer the questions, and we are doing that.

1040

But here is the fact: I made a decision that we would have a candidate in the Sudbury by-election—who is Glenn Thibeault. The past candidate was not going to be the candidate, and there was outreach to him to try to find a way for him to stay involved. That is why I had a conversation with him; that is why Pat Sorbara, my staff member, had a conversation with him, to see if there were ways he might want to stay involved.

As I said, I would expect that of any leader—that they would want to keep past candidates involved in the party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Gerry Loughheed Jr. raised over \$100,000 for your federal friend Justin Trudeau. Last week, a senior Trudeau staffer said that Mr. Loughheed Jr. would not be involved in the coming federal election.

Premier, clearly the federal Liberals are willing and probably quite eager to cut this bad apple loose, even after the mountain of money he raised for them. So, Premier, why don't you do the same and demand that Mr. Loughheed Jr. resign from the Sudbury police services board? Do the right thing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As we discussed last week, we don't direct the Sudbury police services board. They will make their decisions.

What we did was, we—I made a decision that we would have a candidate in the Sudbury by-election who would be Glenn Thibeault, who is a terrific candidate and is going to be a terrific MPP for Sudbury and a strong voice for the community.

We reached out to the past candidate to see if there were ways that he wanted to be involved. But that decision had already been made that a different candidate was going to be in place. That's a difficult moment. As I said in my statement on Friday, I've been a failed candidate. I know, at the moment when you know that you're not going to be the candidate, that that can be a difficult moment. That's why we made the outreach, to see if there were ways that the past candidate wanted to be involved—they were suggestions, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we did, and I would expect that of any leader.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. When this Premier came to office, she said that she'd be different from the last guy. However, the Premier has failed to hold herself to the high standard expected from her office. If charges are laid by the OPP, we expect that she'll step aside until they are resolved. If a conviction is made, and if it is found or alleged that the Premier directed Ms. Sorbara or Mr. Loughheed to have those conversations with Mr. Olivier, then the Premier should resign.

A dark cloud hangs over your office, Premier, with four OPP investigations. Premier, will you step aside if there are charges laid against Pat Sorbara or Gerry Loughheed?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a very interesting question coming, hard on the heels of a report from Elections Ontario that actually exonerated me, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just say to the member opposite that I understand why the member opposite wants to continue to stir this pot, because the member opposite actually doesn't want to talk about the fact that we are making decisions that are going to strengthen this province.

I was at the ROMA/Ontario Good Roads Association this morning, in a very good meeting with the executive, and had conversations with the folks in the halls about the investments that we're making in infrastructure, about the fact that we're working with them in partnership, Mr. Speaker. They have concerns about asset management and about new revenue tools. Those are the things that they want to talk to us about.

I made it clear on Friday that if there are charges laid, then of course Pat Sorbara will stand aside—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier. Last Friday, Premier, you could have come in and announced that Ms. Sorbara and Mr. Loughheed would step aside until the OPP investigation concluded. But, Premier—and I said this before—if you continue to stand by them, you, Premier, will eventually fall with both of them as well.

Premier, you've spouted ludicrous explanations for your behaviour that fall well below the dignity that your office should hold.

Put an end to this distraction that you've created for your government and your caucus. Premier, answer the question: Yes or no, did you instruct Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed to make those calls to Andrew Olivier with options if he agreed to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been extremely clear that any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is false. I've said that over and over and over again. The fact is, a decision had been made that Glenn Thibeault would be our candidate in Sudbury. That decision was made.

The conversations with Andrew Olivier were about keeping him involved in the party. That's the fact. I have said that repeatedly. I will continue to answer that question because that is what happened. It is what I would expect of any leader, that they would want to keep a past candidate involved, particularly at a time which was difficult, when they were not going to be the candidate in the next election. That's the situation we were dealing with. That's why those conversations were held.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, again, back to the Premier: You know, Premier, something just doesn't add up between the call with Pat Sorbara and Mr. Olivier. You said there was a conversation that took place after you had already told the former candidate about the fact that you were going to be appointing Mr. Thibault. Now, if that's true, why did your deputy chief of staff tell Mr. Olivier he would "force the Premier to move to the appointment process" if he didn't step aside? According to the Chief Electoral Officer, that chat took place the day after you claim that you told Mr. Olivier of your decision.

Premier, is the Chief Electoral Officer's time frame correct, or have you forgotten when you instructed Pat Sorbara to make that call to Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is exactly correct. I had a conversation with Andrew Olivier. Pat Sorbara had a conversation the next day. I had made it clear to Andrew Olivier that I would be appointing Glenn Thibault as the candidate. The conversation Pat Sorbara had with him was about how he might stay involved in the party if he chose to do so.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is an investigation going on. In the meantime, I'm not going to force someone to resign in the face of allegations that I do not believe to be true. That actually would have been the easy thing to do, as the member opposite continues to howl for a certain action. That would have been easy, to acquiesce. That's not what I'm going to do. I am going to continue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to continue to do the work of government, Mr. Speaker. I made it clear on Friday: If there are charges laid, then Pat Sorbara will step aside.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The OPP anti-rackets squad is investigating senior

Liberals for their role in the Sudbury bribery scandal, and instead of apologizing or accepting responsibility, the Premier believes she's above the law. Court documents say the investigation hinges on "the corrupt act of dealing in appointments."

Somebody made the decision to engage in that corrupt act and offer Andrew Olivier a job so he could get out of the way. Who directed Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara to offer Andrew Olivier his choice of jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the leader of the third party knows, there was no commitment to an offer of anything for any action. The leader of the opposition knows that. In fact, I believe that Andrew Olivier is on the record saying that there was no specific commitment in our conversations. So the fact is that there was no offer for any specific action. That did not happen.

What we did was, we tried to work with a past candidate who was not going to be our candidate, and that's a hard thing to accept, but he was not going to be our candidate, and we worked to keep him involved.

I hope that the leader of the third party is working with Mr. Cimino and Ms. Shawbonquit to make sure that they are involved, because those are people who have made a sacrifice; they've put their names on the ballot. My hope is that they are going to be able to be involved in the party if they chose to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When this Premier learned that David Livingston was the subject of a police investigation, she rushed to say, "This is not the way a government should operate, this is not the way a Premier's office should conduct itself and it is not the way my office operates."

But when her top aides are under investigation, the Premier is singing quite a different tune. The Premier obviously thinks it's okay for her office, her Premier's office, her government to operate with top aides under investigation.

So I ask the Premier again: Who directed that Andrew Olivier would be offered a job?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): the Minister of Economic Development will come to order.

Premier.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I freely admit that I wanted to find ways—if this young man wanted to stay involved in politics, wanted to stay involved in the party, I wanted to work with him, and I wanted us to be able to provide suggestions. Because there are a lot of ways to be involved in politics, short of being a candidate. That's what those conversations were about.

The leader of the third party knows full well that there have been many changes made, in terms of the retention of documents, in terms of the training we've provided on the advice of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. There are many changes that have been made as a result of actions that were taken in the past.

We are constantly working to make sure that we find ways to do government in a way that's open and transparent to the people of the province. That's exactly why I called Andrew Olivier. I didn't have to call Andrew Olivier. I didn't have to call the past candidate, but I wanted to let him know that I understood this was a difficult moment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and if he wanted to be involved—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Just over two years ago, the Premier made a commitment to Ontarians. Referring to a decade of Liberal scandals, she said, “We must acknowledge our mistakes, take responsibility for them and work together to guarantee that they are not repeated.”

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Two years later, here we are, all over again, with an investigation into “a corrupt act of dealing in appointments” and “corruption between politically sophisticated parties.”

Will this Premier keep her word of two years ago to Ontarians, admit her mistakes, take responsibility and tell the people of this province who issued the order that Andrew Olivier should be offered what the OPP and Elections Ontario refer to as a bribe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just be clear that the leader of the third party is dealing in allegations at the moment. The Chief Electoral Officer said clearly last week, and I quote, “I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.” That's the moment we're in right now: There are allegations and there's an investigation.

To the leader of the third party's question about whether I will continue to learn from mistakes: That's what I believe good government is about. When there are mistakes made or when there are issues that have to be dealt with, of course we learn from them. I also believe that's the human condition. The way we go through life is, we start something, we take action, and if it doesn't work, then we find a way to correct it. That's how I function, that's how our party functions and that's how we will continue to function.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY *

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also, for the Premier. On Friday, the Premier claimed she decided to appoint her candidate in November. Funny, because on December 11, Gerry Lougheed called Andrew Olivier and said, “The Premier, up to now”—December 11—“has always said to me she's in favour of a nomination race. So I want to make that really clear. She's never said to me, ‘I want to appoint him.’”

Premier, those are two very different versions of what happened. My question is: Which one of them is actually the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had a meeting at the end of November with Glenn Thibeault. I made a decision at that point to appoint Glenn Thibeault. I believed at that point, after my meeting with him, that he would be the best candidate for the Sudbury by-election, that he would be the best representative for Sudbury. Everything that happened after that was about making sure he became our candidate, and if the past candidate wanted to stay involved, that he had the opportunity to do that.

I understand the back and forth of question period; I do understand that. But accusing people of being criminals while an investigation is going on, I think, is wrong. I do not think that's right, and so I reject the premise of the leader of the third party's questions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Now that her office is facing down federal prosecutors, the Premier is claiming that she told Andrew Olivier that she was going to make an appointment. Well, that's odd, Speaker, because on December 12, after Andrew Olivier spoke to the Premier, he said to Pat Sorbara, “The Premier has to make her decision.” Pat Sorbara didn't dispute that. In fact, she said the Premier is “going to have to make a decision around the appointment.”

Once again, the question to the Premier: two very different versions of what happened. Which one are we to believe? Which one are Ontarians to believe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just be clear: In my conversation with Andrew Olivier, the whole reason I reached out to Andrew Olivier was that he was not going to be the candidate, that I had made a decision that I was going to appoint Glenn Thibeault and that I wanted to make sure that if Andrew Olivier wanted to stay involved, if he wanted to be involved, he would know what the options were so he could make a decision about how he might want to be involved.

That's the conversation I had with our past candidate. That's the conversation Pat Sorbara had with him the next day. It was all within the framework of my having decided to appoint Glenn Thibeault as the candidate in the Sudbury by-election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, Ontarians are hearing two versions of the bribery scandal, and they both can't be true. There is a version where we hear three people on tape, a tape that was made long before there was a police investigation. In that version, the Premier hadn't made a decision about an appointment. In fact, Gerry Lougheed said, “I want to make that really clear.”

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Education, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: “She’s never said to me, ‘I want to appoint him.’”

And there’s another version, from the Premier herself, made under the hot lights of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education, come to order, please—second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to let me do my job.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there’s another version, from the Premier, made under the hot lights of a possible criminal charge, claiming that she made a decision about an appointment back in November.

I’m going to repeat again: two different stories. I ask the Premier to come clean with the public and tell us which one is true.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I’ve done that and I will do it again. I had a meeting with Glenn Thibeault at the end of November. I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury. I made that decision.

I didn’t make that decision public; it’s true. I didn’t call the leader of the third party and I didn’t call the interim leader of the opposition. I didn’t make a public statement about that. But I had made that decision at the end of November. Once I had met Glenn Thibeault, that decision was made.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is also for the Premier. Premier, you held a press conference on Friday. The whole world was hoping that you would do the right thing. Instead, you doubled down on your sad response from the day before.

Premier, you had the chance to do the right thing. You had the opportunity to cut Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed loose, at least until these investigations are complete. Instead, you chose to stand by them. According to the Chief Electoral Officer, they have broken the law, yet you continue to stand behind Sorbara and Loughheed. Is it because you gave them direct orders to offer inducements to Andrew Olivier? Premier, are you not in fact protecting them so that they’ll protect you?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, are you not in fact—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Time’s up. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just be clear about what the Chief Electoral Officer said last week: “I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone’s guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.” The investigations are entirely independent, Mr. Speaker; they are ongoing. Right now, we are dealing with allegations. In

my statement on Friday, I made it clear that if there are charges, then my staff member will step aside. I made it very clear exactly why we had the conversations with our past candidate. I will continue to do the work of the government while those investigations are going on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, you came to office saying you would hold the office to a higher standard. In your two years, you have failed every time you’ve been tested on that promise. You failed again last week. This is your chance for a re-test. Stop protecting yourself by protecting Loughheed and Sorbara.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development—second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Two years ago, you said you would run things a new way when it came to ethics and accountability. When it comes to ethics and accountability now, you’re just running away.

Premier, you’ve been caught in your own snare. Now it’s time to come clean. Order the resignations of Sorbara and Loughheed, or consider your own.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On this issue of doing things differently, one of the things I said on Friday—and I used this example because I think it is a stark example of a change. There have been members of the opposition who have come forward and have asked for appointments from our government in exchange for stepping down from their seats. I’m not suggesting that this is the first time in history this has ever happened; I know there are lots of examples of this. But what’s different, Mr. Speaker, is that I said no. On the advice of my staff and in consultation with my staff, we said, “No. No, we’re not going to do that. We’re not going to proffer an appointment in exchange for an opposition member stepping down from his seat.”

That is an example. I was using that as an example of how things have changed and how we are doing things differently.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier’s deputy chief of staff and campaign director, Pat Sorbara, is facing investigations for bribery under section 96 of the Election Act.

Will the Premier explain to Ontarians why Pat Sorbara is working in the Premier’s office when there’s clearly evidence that she has broken the law? Isn’t it time for Pat Sorbara to go?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, it appears that hell hath no fury like a party scorned.

The Premier made a decision to appoint a candidate in Sudbury. The candidate she supported for that nomination is a man very worthy of the kind of confidence invested in him by the Premier.

On this side of the House, we actually like to keep people engaged in the political process. We understand that there are many ways to serve, one being as a candidate, but many other ways as well.

Having made the decision to appoint Glenn Thibeault as the candidate, people did reach out to say, "How can you stay involved? There are many ways to stay involved." That's the right way to do politics, and I think the member opposite should take a lesson from the Premier on how to keep past party members engaged.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Staying involved doesn't mean you can break the Election Act.

Gerry Loughheed is the chair of the Sudbury police services board. He's supposed to be part of the system that enforces the law. But Gerry Loughheed is facing investigation for bribery. There is evidence that he broke the law.

Can the Premier explain to Ontarians why she thinks that Gerry Loughheed should still be the chair of the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member opposite knows very well that the fact that Mr. Loughheed is the chair of the Sudbury police services board is a decision of the police services board. They in fact met last week, Speaker, they looked at the facts and they voted to keep Mr. Loughheed as the chair of the police services board.

I think that's where the accountability is, that's where the decision-making is, and we should respect that decision.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Associate Minister of Finance. I know the associate minister has been working hard to build Ontario's new retirement pension plan. This is something that the people of Ontario need. The reality is that a significant number of Ontarians don't have an adequate workplace pension plan or are not saving enough for retirement. After a lifetime of hard work, Ontarians deserve better.

A number of Halton residents say that they are pleased with our government taking steps to help Ontarians be financially secure when they retire. Younger families in my riding are concerned about their retirement security and that of their kids and grandkids. The Canada Pension Plan is just not enough.

The minister and our government have committed to engaging with Ontarians on the ORPP. I know the minister has been criss-crossing the province to speak with Ontarians about our plan to enhance retirement security. Can the minister please inform this House about what she's hearing from Ontarians about the ORPP?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Halton for the question. The member is right: The Premier has stressed the importance of consulting on the ORPP in my mandate letter. It has been informative to

travel the province to meet with people to discuss the ORPP and hear their feedback. From Thunder Bay to Ottawa, Windsor to Peterborough, I've had the opportunity to meet with representatives from business, labour, associations and organizations, families and individuals.

There was a diversity of opinions, but the common thread throughout these conversations was that people are concerned about their retirement security. People are concerned that they have not saved enough or that they might outlive their savings. Several people also worry that they may never be able to retire.

Mr. Speaker, that is very troubling to our government. We believe that after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, Ontarians deserve a secure retirement. That's why we're moving forward with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, again, to the minister for her hard work and for that answer. I'm pleased to hear that the minister has had the opportunity to get some solid input from many Ontarians on this very important initiative. I know that Halton residents will appreciate the government's efforts to actively engage Ontario residents on this vital matter.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the Associate Minister of Finance: Our government has been actively advocating that the federal government needs to make a modest enhancement to CPP, without success. As we move forward with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, some of my constituents have asked whether we are continuing to press for a CPP enhancement. Many say this would be the best way to ensure a secure retirement. Can the minister please inform the House about whether our government is still pursuing an enhancement to CPP?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, again, to the hard-working member from Halton for this important question.

Our preferred option to address retirement security remains CPP enhancement. The Premier and Minister of Finance have been advocating for CPP enhancement since 2010. Over a year ago, having extensive discussions with the provinces and territories, there was agreement to continue moving forward with discussions on CPP enhancement. Unfortunately, the federal government unilaterally shut down any and all further discussions on this issue.

We know that Ontarians expect their government to take leadership to help us secure their retirement. We also know that we cannot wait for another government to take action on this important issue. That is why we're moving forward with a made-in-Ontario solution with the ORPP so that we can strengthen retirement security for Ontarians.

As a participant, a small business owner in Markham, said, "When we share a little, we gain a lot."

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Attorney General. Minister, last week's very disturbing report released by the Chief Electoral Officer on apparent contraventions of the Election Act is, in his own words, "unprecedented." As AG, you have a unique responsibility to advise cabinet on legal matters. Have you advised the Premier that, according to the Election Act, a specific job offer is, in fact, not required for an apparent contravention to have occurred?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to repeat again, the Chief Electoral Officer is an independent officer—we know that—of the Legislative Assembly. As I mentioned previously on numerous occasions, this process exclusively involved non-partisan officials within the Ministry of the Attorney General. The system is already designed—and I think the Chief Electoral Officer stipulated that on page 4 of his report—so that only non-partisan officials handle any complaints. The third party and the opposition know that. If they want to have more information, they can reach out to the Chief Electoral Officer and he will explain the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: And on page 10 of the report, it very specifically says, "an apparent contravention could be established if a candidate is offered a range of options rather than a specific role in a specific office." Sound familiar, Premier?

Minister, what assurances can you give the public that this investigation will be dealt with quickly, before memories fail and evidence is deleted?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order, please—a second time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Control, Alt, Delete.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, please come to order—a second time.

Attorney General.

1110

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm going to repeat it again: The system is already designed so that only non-partisan officials handle this complaint. As I said last week, the matter has been referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada by the ministry. The member should know the process, because the Chief Electoral Officer said in his report that his office briefed the opposition about the independent process. I guess that these questions should not be asked if they have read the report.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Has the Premier or her staff ever offered jobs or appointments in order to keep anyone else from running?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered this question many times in reference to the Sudbury situation. There was no offer made for any action. We've been very clear about that. It hasn't been done in the Sudbury situation, and it hasn't been done elsewhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier seems to think that everyone is going around and doing these types of activities and that this is very commonplace. It may be standard in her party; it's certainly not standard in ours.

Pat Sorbara called Andrew Olivier and she said this to Andrew—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock, please. Order.

Please put your question.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you. Pat Sorbara said this to Andrew: "You're like the third person I've even heard her ask this of.... That's why she said, 'I hope we're standing ... together, and we need to find the longer-term ... role here, not in Glenn's shadow, but in ... your own voice.'"

Because, as she continued to say, "If there were other things that" Olivier was "particularly interested in" that are within the Premier's realm to make Olivier part of, then "she is more than prepared to do that."

Who are the other two people that the Premier has made a call to, and what kind of offers did she make to them that were within her realm?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really don't know where this question is going. I've been very clear that the conversations with our past candidate were about suggestions of ways that he might want to stay involved.

There are many ways to be involved; there are many options. That was the conversation that I had had with Andrew Olivier. That's the conversation that Pat Sorbara had with him.

I know that those are conversations that have been had by other parties. I know that Jonah Schein and Paul Ferreira both had ways of staying involved in the party. Of course it was after an election; I understand it was after an election.

But the fact is, people stay involved in parties. That was the conversation that I had with Andrew Olivier, and that's the conversation that Pat Sorbara had with him.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail, the Honourable Kevin Flynn, and it concerns the global economic marketplace.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, the economy of Ontario, in order to be globally competitive, must always deal with the evolving challenges and the constant changes that are before us.

In today's workplace, for example, many people are often not keeping the traditional 9-to-5 business day and taking weekends off. In my own riding of Etobicoke North, I hear stories about families who are, for example,

affected by a number of these different changes that affect their life, their personal economy, their home situation and, of course, their workplace.

From globalization to the aging workforce, people in this province want to know that we as a government, in our capacity as stewards of the economy, are in fact planning for what's in store.

My question is this: Can the minister please explain what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario's labour laws adapt to the ever-changing marketplace?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member from Etobicoke North for what I think is a very insightful question.

As the member will know, and as all members of the House will know, all the members of cabinet received public mandate letters. In my mandate letter, I was asked to undertake a review of Ontario's changing workplace, to ensure that the labour laws and the employment standards we have actually meet the needs of our modern economy.

Starting very shortly, in March, public consultations are going to begin. They're going to look at the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Standards Act, and we want to know how they could be amended in order to meet the challenges of the changing workplace.

We'll be looking at the increase of non-standard working relationships, the rise in prominence of the service sector, and the impact of new technology. These special advisers that I've appointed will report back with recommendations within the next 18 months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I appreciate the steps, initiatives and programs the government is undertaking to tackle this particular issue, especially as we go forward in this challenging global marketplace.

Minister, you mentioned that the review will be undertaken by a number of advisers and an expert panel who will, I believe, be charged with reporting back to the House in 18 months. I presume that their recommendations will help inform what changes may be required to employment standards, labour relations and a number of other aspects in the labour domain.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you please tell this House who the advisers will be and a little bit about their vision for how they'll guide this important review of Ontario's changing marketplace?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the supplementary.

I'm really pleased with the choice we've made here. We've appointed two special advisers: Michael Mitchell and the Honourable John C. Murray. They're going to lead and co-ordinate these upcoming public consultations and the review itself.

These people have a depth of relevant legal knowledge and experience that I think is unmatched in the province of Ontario. Michael Mitchell is a former senior partner at Sack Goldblatt Mitchell. His 37 years in practice have given him a wealth of experience in the field; he's even

co-authored a textbook on the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The Honourable John C. Murray has been practising law since 1969. Appointed to the bench of the Superior Court in 2004, he has provided legal advice to numerous public institutions, universities and hospitals. He's a pioneer of alternative dispute resolution. He's well-prepared to face the challenge of this review.

We should be especially proud of the opportunity to undertake this review with these two fine individuals. I would urge all members of the House to both become involved themselves and to urge their constituents to get involved as well.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier: Premier, there's a sad irony in what has transpired since last Thursday in question period. You informed the House last Thursday, as we all learned about the contraventions of the Election Act by your staff, that you would take time to consider and deliberate about the report before you responded.

I was hoping for honesty, a quality that you preach constantly. But as I left, astonished, on Friday, instead of speaking honestly, you impugned and maligned the reputation of every member in this House with an unwarranted attack.

Premier, it's telling that no one trusts you. Even your candidates bring tape recorders to their meetings with you because they all know you say one thing and you do another. Why should anyone trust you about anything, especially after what has taken place in Sudbury and your involvement?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I really do challenge the premise of the question. But I want to just say to the member opposite that I spoke in the Legislature on Thursday—that's exactly right. I answered questions. And I got a lot of advice and I thought long and hard about what I was going to say on Friday. At 4 o'clock in the morning I got up and actually wrote the statement that I made on Friday, because I wanted the people of Ontario to know exactly where I was coming from on this, why I was doing what I was doing, why I had done what I had done.

And I did include in my statement the fact that there have been actions taken by other parties, like members coming across the floor to ask for appointments in exchange for stepping down from their seats. I made that point, Mr. Speaker, because I needed the people of Ontario to understand that we said no. We said we're not going to do that. We're not going to operate like that, even though that is what has been done before. That's why we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Premier, you continue to malign and impugn members in this House. If that's a fact, come forward, come clean: Tell us who they are.

Premier, you challenged the premise of my question. I'm challenging your integrity. You have stood in this House and have said one thing after another, and they've all borne out to be false, each and every time. With each falsehood, we have another OPP investigation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm drawing the line on that. Withdraw, please.

1120

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm listening carefully.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Premier, there are four investigations now. Every time you say one thing, you do another. There's clear, clear evidence of your involvement here, and you need to come clean with the people of Ontario. You can't continue to impugn the members in this House in defense of your actions—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just be clear about what the Chief Electoral Officer said. Once again, the Chief Electoral Officer stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." That's the fact. We're dealing with allegations, Mr. Speaker.

Let me just say to the member opposite: Unlike the way he might do business, I was making a point in my statement on Friday. I wasn't creating a situation where individuals' names were going to be dragged through the mud. That's not what I was doing. I was making a point.

The fact is that this is something that has happened in the past and it has happened in the recent past. It's not about going after an individual. It really is not what it was about. I was trying to put in context the fact that we are doing things differently. We said no in those situations when in the past the answer has been yes.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

Speaker, the Premier is protecting Pat Sorbara because the Premier insists Mrs. Sorbara was offering what the OPP is calling "bribes" on the Liberal clock instead of on the government clock. It's the government's job to make laws, not to break them. Moonlighting in another position doesn't give you an excuse to start violating fundamental principles. A bribe is a bribe no matter whose time card you're punching. It's not a "What Happens in Vegas Stays in Vegas" type of a situation.

Speaker, does the Premier really think that it is okay for senior staff to be on the job while they are under criminal investigation? Because, frankly, Ontarians don't.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This story is not that complicated. The story is that there was a seat vacated in Sudbury five months after the election. An NDP MP decided that he wanted to run for the Ontario Liberal Party in Sudbury. He had conversations with the Premier. The Premier was enormously impressed, as well she should be, and made the determination that Glenn Thibeault would be our candidate in the upcoming by-election. After that decision had been made, there were conversations with the past candidate about how to keep him involved.

But let's just talk about who Glenn Thibeault is and why the Premier would choose to actually appoint him as our candidate to make sure that he would come to Queen's Park and represent. He has fought tirelessly for the most vulnerable people in Sudbury: people with disabilities, people with autism. He's worked with the Big Brothers Big Sisters—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: My question is about Pat Sorbara, who offered Andrew Olivier "a full-time or a part-time job at a constituency office" or "appointments to boards or commissions." It doesn't matter what hat Mrs. Sorbara was working with—it was wrong. It is spelled out in the Criminal Code and in the Election Act. It is wrong.

But the Premier says, "The role that Pat Sorbara plays as a director of campaigns is quite separate from her role as deputy chief of staff." Why is the Premier okay with Pat Sorbara offering what the OPP is calling a bribe with her campaign director hat on, if she thinks it is wrong to offer bribes with her chief of staff hat on?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I've known the Premier since we were both elected back in 2003. She is a woman of enormous integrity. She is a woman who is thoughtful, who is principled, who will sometimes do the difficult thing when it's the right thing.

In this case, she has chosen a difficult path. The easy path would be to just throw people under the bus. She has chosen not to do that. She has chosen to actually let the investigation unfold. She has chosen to co-operate fully with any investigation. She has chosen the right, the principled, the thoughtful path, and I have even more respect for her now than I had before because she has chosen to do the difficult, but right, thing, and has rejected the easy path.

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and, may I add, a fine MPP.

This government has demonstrated its commitment to invest in people, to invest in infrastructure and to support an innovative business climate in Ontario. Despite the government's efforts to support economic development through mainstream programs and services, aboriginal people continue to face significant economic disadvantages.

Our province's diversity is one of its greatest aspects, and my riding of Davenport is truly emblematic of Ontario's rich cultural diversity. As a society largely made up of immigrants, it is imperative that we recognize the contributions of Ontario's First Nations peoples to our province's diversity.

We all recognize that a strong and vibrant aboriginal community strengthens Ontario culturally, socially and economically. Speaker, through you to the minister: While we are making progress in many areas, can the minister inform the House about some initiatives this government has undertaken to better cater to the needs of aboriginal communities and organizations across the province?

Hon. David Zimmer: The member is correct: Mainstream programs often fall short in delivering the necessary programs to our most vulnerable populations.

We have been active on many fronts, creating many opportunities for both the private sector and communities to participate in a meaningful way and to help the Ontario economy. Just last week, we announced the continuation of our New Relationship Fund. The fund is designed to support aboriginal communities and organizations' participation in meaningful consultation and engagement with government and the private sector.

Ontario has invested \$97 million in the New Relationship Fund between 2008 and 2014. We are glad that the aboriginal communities are benefiting from this program in their relationship with the rest of Ontario and the development of their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Minister, thank you for informing this House on the New Relationship Fund. It is wonderful news. This is a great investment in helping people, communities and businesses, and in helping to create a more robust business environment.

However, the fact remains that the unemployment rate for First Nation people is approximately three times the Ontario average on-reserve and twice the Ontario average off-reserve. We know that a constructive, co-operative relationship with aboriginal peoples in Ontario leads to improved opportunities and a better future, not only for aboriginal people but for all people living in Ontario.

Through you, Speaker: Will the minister expand further on just what is happening with this investment and how it is directly benefiting aboriginal communities in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, we want to see the gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people closed off, because when aboriginal people prosper, all of Ontario prospers.

The fund was originally announced as a four-year commitment in 2008, but it has been so successful that we will continue to invest in the fund on an ongoing basis.

During the 2014-15 year, aboriginal communities and organizations pursued a number of projects through enhanced program funding. With a \$14.5-million investment this year, the ministry has funded over 103 core consultation projects, representing 154 communities; and 30 enhanced consultation projects, representing some 51 aboriginal communities and organizations. These projects will continue to show that aboriginal communities are pursuing innovative solutions that ensure their future prosperity, and I commend that; we should all commend that.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier. It's clear that your party is willing to rule a verdict of innocence without trial. You continually tell the people of Ontario that you and your staff did nothing wrong, as if being elected Premier made you both judge and jury for your unscrupulous actions.

After several complaints from the public, the Greater Sudbury police board decided in a closed-door meeting that Gerry Loughheed Jr. would continue as chair, despite the investigation.

1130

Premier, I was listening to this morning's opening prayer; it referenced honesty and integrity. This investigation is not going to disappear. Why won't you ask this man to step aside while under investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I've mentioned and stated on numerous occasions, police services boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective policing within their municipalities. Among their duties, police services boards generally determine objectives and priorities with respect to police services in their jurisdictions and establish policies for the effective management of police services.

Under the Police Services Act, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has no jurisdiction or power to remove a member from a police services board. All police services board members, however, are appointed by the province or a municipal council and are subject to a code of conduct that is enshrined under the Police Services Act through a regulation. I understand, as the member mentioned, that the board considered this matter itself and have decided to elect Mr. Loughheed as chair of the board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, back to the Premier: What does your government have against accountability? You've questioned the integrity of the Auditor General, you have brushed off the report from the Chief Electoral Officer, and it doesn't seem to concern you that there are four ongoing OPP investigations into your government's

unethical political practice. These are all independent accountability officers who are saying that you and your government have done wrong. More reports are on their way.

Premier, everyone is telling you that you have done wrong, so when will you do the right thing and have Mr. Loughheed step aside?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The fair and most accountable thing to do would be to let an independent body which is responsible for review of these matters conduct its business, as opposed to raising these issues in the House and asking for some sort of political interference, which the opposition is doing.

As I mentioned, there is a code of conduct which is in force by regulation. It's regulation 421/97, just for the member's reference if he wants to check it. It's up to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission—the OCPC—to consider whether the code of conduct is being complied with or not. That's an independent body, an arm's-length body, and it's up to them to see whether the code of conduct is enforced. I will leave that work up to the OCPC, as opposed to the political interference that is being sought by the members opposite.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. One of the Premier's top aides is under criminal investigation, and my constituents think that's pretty serious. So do the OPP, Elections Ontario and federal crown prosecutors. Where I come from, when someone is accused of something and they're in a public position—like one of the most powerful non-elected positions in this province—when they're under investigation, where I come from, they step down until the investigation is over.

What does it take for the Premier of this province to do what would actually be normal practice in most places and have that person step down until the investigation is over?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, let's go back to what's actually happening here. What's happening is that the Chief Electoral Officer has called the allegations against two people baseless: the Premier and Mr. Thiabeault. Those allegations have been considered baseless.

There are two other investigations going on, and we are fully co-operating with these investigations. I think that when an allegation is made, that does not make it true. Anyone listening today would think that there had already been a conviction, for heaven's sake. There is an investigation under way. We're fully co-operating with the investigation. The Premier has said that if, in fact, a charge is laid, then that changes the story. But I think that what's important is that there is an investigation under way and we are completely co-operating with that investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: The Premier has refused to accept any responsibility for her

actions in this matter. She is protecting Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed from this scandal. The Premier apparently doesn't see any problems with Andrew Olivier being offered a job to get out of the way, even though the law is clear.

But for my constituents, the biggest issue is, we need to be held to a higher standard. The people who are involved in this investigation need to step back so that the investigation appears to be open and transparent, the words we hear all the time from your government.

Again, why don't you take normal practice and force these people to step aside until the investigation is complete?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has received lots of advice on this. I think both opposition parties have been very generous in their advice.

That advice has been heard. You heard from the Premier today that she did take that advice seriously. Then she really thought through the issues here. She took a thoughtful, principled, ethical approach. She made the determination that when allegations are baseless, as she knows them to be, she will let that investigation unfold. But she will not force the resignation of someone when the allegations against that person are baseless.

I actually think our Premier has demonstrated a new and different and better way—not an easier way, but a better way—of dealing with opposition allegations.

IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Minister, both Ontario's culture and its economy rely greatly on our immigrant population. Each year we welcome many highly skilled newcomers, who bring with them a wealth of knowledge and abilities that do contribute to our province. Without immigration, Ontario's working-age population will begin to decline.

There are many talented newcomers in my riding of Kitchener Centre who do contribute greatly to our community, and we want to make certain that they continue to be welcomed in our province and meet with opportunities.

Speaker, could the minister please tell us what actions the government is taking to ensure that Ontario continues to have a healthy immigrant population?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. I want to thank the honourable member from Kitchener Centre for asking.

As an immigrant myself, just like many of my colleagues here today, I know the struggles that many newcomers face.

Ontario was built by immigrants. Our government is committed to making sure that they continue to find success in our great province. This is why we recently re-introduced Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, it would make Ontario the second province in the country, after Quebec, to have its own immigrant legislation. Bill 49 will put in place the tools and authority

needed to welcome immigrants who will help Ontario meet its future labour and market needs.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'd like to draw your attention to standing orders 23(h) and (i). The Premier's comments today in this House in response to my question, as well as her comments last Friday, are tantamount—they are making allegations against another member and imputing false or unavowed motives to another member and, I would say, to all members.

I would like you to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I was listening carefully all the time. I did not hear that. I thank the member for his interjection.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you for the indulgence. I'd love to introduce today page captain Dhairya Bhatt and his family: mother Mamta, father Amish, grandmother Bina and grandfather Nilesh.

I want them all to feel welcomed in the House today. Thank you so much for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LEO JORDAN

Mr. Randy Hillier: I was sorry to hear of the recent passing of a great community leader: William Leo Jordan.

On Saturday, I was joined by my colleagues Steve Clark, John Yakabuski, Jack MacLaren and Ted Amott in Smiths Falls to commemorate the life of Leo Jordan, along with Leo's family and many friends.

Leo was a former reeve of Montague township in my riding. He served on Lanark county council and also served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for almost a decade.

Leo was first elected in 1990 as MPP for Lanark—Renfrew and served in opposition as critic for a number of important portfolios, including energy, which drew off of his 39 years of experience at Ontario Hydro.

After securing his seat for the second time by more than 10,000 votes, Leo served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism in the Mike Harris government.

I first met Leo when I became an advocate for property rights and smaller government and had the pleasure of his ongoing support.

Leo will be sadly missed by his family, as well as the many people and friends whose lives he touched and helped over his long career.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, as you know, this is Black History Month, and I want to tell about something we're celebrating in the town of Tecumseh and indeed in the entire region of Windsor and Essex county.

This is a story about our rich heritage, the success of the Underground Railroad, and the brave black men who served the crown and fought in the Rebellions of 1837. It's also a story about two dedicated descendants of these African Canadian pioneers: Elise Harding-Davis and Glen Cook.

During slavery, in the United States, as property, blacks had no say or control over where or even if bodies were interred. So when refugee slaves came to Ontario, they established settlements, built churches and, for the first time, these pioneers bought land for their own graveyards. That's the background of this story, Speaker.

I live just off Banwell Road. Just up the road and over the tracks you'll find a small five-acre cemetery. All that remains are five headstones, but they tell a story that needs to be told. One stone is dated 1865. Other markers are dated 1870, 1877, and, for James Ross, 1908. James Ross was murdered for his pocket change. His murderer was the last man hanged in Sandwich.

There are others buried there beneath sunken markers on overgrown plots and in dense woodlots.

Elise Harding-Davis and Glen Cook have documented their history, and I'm proud to say that, because of their work, the Ontario Heritage Trust, with help from the town of Tecumseh, will erect a provincial heritage plaque there later this year.

So, Speaker, through you, a salute from the Ontario Legislature to Elise and Glen for their dedication to this very important project and for helping us all understand and celebrate our shared heritage.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION AWARDS

Mr. Yvan Baker: In January, I had the privilege of presenting the 2014 Community Recognition Awards, recognizing the positive difference being made by individuals and groups in Etobicoke Centre. The awards were presented at my New Year's levee and were awarded to people living, working or volunteering in Etobicoke Centre who make a real difference in the lives of people in our community.

I'd like to take this moment to recognize the recipients of this year's awards in this House. For outstanding volunteer service to the community: Brian Brennand, Oksana Cherchyk, Jim Fielding, Bruce Gleeson, Barbara Hayworth, Odile Sahl, Ted Scott, Florence Thiffault, John Varley, Bill Wilson and Mary Wilson.

For outstanding volunteer service to seniors: Dr. Ronald Groshaw, Sharon Bradbury, George Alexandris,

AnQi Chang, Elizabeth Ditchew, Gayasha Perera, Mary Klamas, Helen Kerekes, Lydia Lelyk and a group of volunteers from Etobicoke Services for Seniors congregate dining.

For outstanding volunteer service to the community by youth: Matthew Barrett, Johnathan McAvoy, Kathy Huang, Victoria Lee and Kirby Wong.

For outstanding service by professional staff, employees or employers: Daniel Bogue, Mary Green, Luke Lynch, Rose Wang, Sandy Simmons and Wendy Samuel.

The recipients recognized come from a range of ages and backgrounds and contribute in a range of ways, from caring for seniors to engaging youth to volunteering in their parish. They make a difference every single day.

I'm honoured to represent Etobicoke Centre and to have the opportunity through these awards to recognize those who are making a difference in our community.

Thank you to all the recipients for what you do and to all those in Etobicoke Centre who work to make Etobicoke Centre and Ontario better every single day.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Harris: This week we're seeing work by both opposition parties to update regulation 316/03 under the Highway Traffic Act that allows utility task vehicle, or UTV, owners the same rights to drive on designated roads and trails as ATV owners, something the government continues to stall on despite all-party support.

In the wake of more foot-dragging, we've seen the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and later this week my caucus colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, bring forth private members' bills to step in where government has stalled.

It was over a year ago—November 7, 2013, to be exact—that the government member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell put forth a motion to make rules fair for off-road vehicle drivers across the board. We continue to wait for that playing field to be levelled, as promised, through regulation.

Since the motion's passing, I've written the minister on numerous occasions asking for the regulatory update that would help Ontario businesses, farmers, agribusinesses and recreational clubs like golf courses, campgrounds and riding groups to make better use of their off-road vehicles.

Down in my neck of the woods, in New Hamburg, Ontario Drive and Gear has been manufacturing the Argo since the 1960s, a vehicle that has a world-renowned reputation for its versatility and capability in traversing difficult terrain. Updating regulations to reflect what is available to safely ride between trails and properties on rural highways will generate greater demand for these Ontario products and, in turn, help create well-paying jobs.

Speaker, it has already been a decade too long. It's time to kick-start this needed change and allow for off-

road vehicle ownership to drive on designated roads, highways and trails, as other all-terrain vehicles do.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to talk about the recent by-election in my city, in Sudbury, and to talk about what could have been. February 5 could have been a day of pride for the people of Sudbury. We could have sent Ontario's first severely disabled person or even the first aboriginal woman to the Legislature. You see, Speaker, everyone who cares about Sudbury knows that we've had an image problem in the past. Think about the moonscape. Well, left to ourselves, we could have made history, for all the right reasons.

Electing the very first quadriplegic person or First Nations person could have united all of us together and allowed us to stand proud and say, "Sudbury did this. We did this."

The media from all over could have come to our city to see how progressive, caring and inclusive Sudbury really is. We could have showcased the Northern Lights Festival Boréal, the longest-running folk festival—and not only is it bilingual, it is a multicultural event; or TG Inner selves, which works with transgender people; or a visit to the Samaritan Centre to see the Corner Clinic, which is dedicated to caring for the homeless people of Sudbury. This summer the Parapan and Pan American athletes could have come and made the trip up north to celebrate one of their own and to see more of what a progressive, inclusive and caring community Sudbury is. This is the story that could have been. We all know what we got instead.

1310

ELIJAH MARSH

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today with great sadness to relay the story about the tragic death of Elijah Marsh. As you know, three-year-old Elijah was found frozen, with no vital signs, beside a house in my riding last Thursday.

Young Elijah is, to say the least, greatly, greatly missed by the whole community in Neptune, and by everybody across the country. In fact, I think Elijah's tragic death has struck a chord around the world.

I would like to thank the men and women at 32 division; Sam Fernandes, the division superintendent who led the search; and the volunteers who came from across the GTA to search for Elijah. I'd like to also thank all the members of the community who are standing with the family right now, getting them through this incredible grief that they are having to endure.

Out of this horrible death—it's just remarkable the amount of good that this tragedy has elicited from people. When I was there the other day, there was a group of students from Dante high school who stopped and said the Our Father beside a little makeshift vigil where Elijah—it was marked of his passing.

So we say to Elijah's family and the greater community at Baycrest and Neptune: Rest in peace, Elijah. Out of your tragic death, you've inspired us all to come together and remark on what is important in this life, and that is taking care of our children.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to recognize the local efforts to raise awareness on the state of the maintenance of winter roads across Parry Sound–Muskoka. For the past two winter seasons, the conditions have been particularly challenging.

Last week, on the day that the Legislature resumed, I tabled in this House a petition containing 2,500 signatures. Today, I have added 250 signatures to that record, and individual support continues to pour in.

These individuals are all calling for positive change that will improve the delivery of winter road maintenance and make our roads safer. The petition specifically calls for a return to a delivery model that allows Ministry of Transportation staff to be able to direct the contractor on deployment of vehicles as conditions dictate.

Taking into account the amount of snowfall and cold temperatures experienced the past two winter seasons, I believe that the experience under the previous model, compared with the current model, illustrates the need for change.

I'm pleased to have the support of many municipalities across Parry Sound–Muskoka. I hope that the government and the Minister of Transportation will listen to municipal delegations at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association/Ontario Good Roads Association conference going on this week and make improvements to winter road maintenance.

ICE YACHTING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to tell you about an incredible sporting event that was recently held in my riding of Kingston and the Islands: the international ice yachting DN class world cup championships. This event is held annually, alternating between Europe and North America.

Naturally, the decision on locality is always a last-minute one, based on weather and ice conditions—challenging when competitors must ship their boats internationally. Imagine about 100 competitors from 15 countries or more, including Poland, Sweden, Finland and France, poised with all their equipment to descend at short notice on the right place.

With eight inches of glass-like ice and clear skies, Lake Ontario was the right place to be, and, frankly, the only place to be sailing on Lake Ontario is Kingston, with its reputation of the best sailing in the world.

At speeds of up to 100 kilometres an hour, ice sailing is not for the faint-hearted. I invite to you look at my social media to see a stunning video of this event.

Precision team spirit was demonstrated by the Kingston Yacht Club, Queen's students, the Kingston Economic Development Corp. and many volunteers. State-of-the-art sport and spirit with the best possible human infrastructure—that, Mr. Speaker, is a typical Kingston classic.

Merci. Meegwetch. Thank you.

FAMILY SKATING EVENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This past Family Day, I held a free public skate event in our riding of Kitchener Centre at the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium's Kiwanis rink, and I know that many of my fellow MPPs did the same. Much to my delight, I was absolutely overwhelmed by the response. We had hundreds of constituents come out to have some fun with us.

Ironically, the event gave us all an opportunity to escape the frigid cold outside and warm up inside an arena where we keep ice. The crowd was very diverse. Some were experienced skaters whereas others were out there for the very first time. The event was also a great opportunity for new Canadians to get involved in the community and, more importantly, to help them to adapt to Canadian culture. One such individual was named Padha; she's from Burma. She was lacing up her skates for the very first time as she took part in our communal gathering on the ice.

Having grown up in a family that immigrated to Canada from Italy, I can appreciate the value of any experience that helps immigrants become more accustomed to Canadian culture and climate. The event gave our constituents a chance to not only have some fun and get some exercise, but it provided them with a chance to network and connect with others, which is really invaluable to help immigrants integrate into our culture here in Canada.

I want to extend my gratitude to everyone who made the effort to join us, and I'm so pleased at the level of community building that I witnessed. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RAISE A GLASS

TO ONTARIO ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR PORTER

UN TOAST À L'ONTARIO

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act /
Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Todd Smith: The Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to change the system for the retail, sale and transportation of alcohol in line with several recommendations made by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. It also seeks to make amendments that will allow for a new warehousing regulatory regime that will provide better access to market and stronger growth potential for many products that are manufactured right here in Ontario.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AMENDMENT ACT (VOTING HOURS EXTENSION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES (PROLONGATION DES HEURES DE SCRUTIN)

Mr. Berardinetti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m. / Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales pour que les bureaux de vote restent ouverts jusqu'à 21 h.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: This bill amends the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, to extend the hours when voting places are open for votes, from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98, the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. Smith and Ms. Elliott exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 30 and Ms. Elliott assumes ballot item number 42, and that notice for ballot item numbers 31, 34, 35 and 36 be waived.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98, the following changes be made to the public ballot list for private

members' public business: Mr. Smith and Ms. Elliott exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 30 and Ms. Elliott assumes ballot item number 42, and that notice for ballot items 31, 34, 35 and 36 be waived.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I've received more petitions to do with improved winter road maintenance, and the petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I support and have signed this petition.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have here a petition submitted from across Ontario, but specifically I see names here from Oshawa and from Durham, and I'm pleased to read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational

disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

I am pleased to affix my name to this and to send it with page Julie.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Dhairya to bring forward.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

"Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

"Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health

and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

"Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

"Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients' own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

"Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

"That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home."

I support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Hannah.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

"Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

"(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

"(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

"(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and give it to page Arlyne to take to the table.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians on Ontario's roads and making the province North America's most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

"Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

"Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that Ontario's impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and will give my petition to page Ali.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the good people of Lombardy for supporting Norm Miller's Bill 58. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize the new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition, and I'll send it to the table with page Muntder.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas accessibility to our public health care system is a foundational value of Ontario; and

"Whereas all individuals should have equal access to health care services regardless of their ability to pay; and
1330

"Whereas patients requiring health care services often have to drive to a hospital to receive these services; and

"Whereas hospitals are increasingly using parking charges as an avenue for revenue generation thereby impacting some patients' access based on their ability to pay; and

"Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2014 election campaign to cap hospital parking fees;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario follow through on their commitment to cap parking fees at Ontario's hospitals at a level that ensures equitable access to health care."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to give it to page Amber to bring to the Clerk.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this, affix my signature, and give it to page Dhairya to bring forward.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease

and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature, and send it with page Inaya.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect, and substandard care for patients at our hospitals and long-term-care homes;

"Whereas there are more and more cases of hospital acquired infections;

"Whereas people with complaints have no independent body to listen to their concerns;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of hospitals and other front line care organizations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's hospitals, long-term-care homes and other front line care organizations."

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Muntder to deliver to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition regarding fluoride for all Ontario people who drink water.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the #1 recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I shall put my name to this and give this to page William, of the wonderful riding of Kitchener Centre.

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a petition I picked up quite early this morning at the Pioneer station in Hagersville. It's titled "Say No to New Gas Taxes" and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Kathleen Wynne's carbon tax may not only apply to gasoline but also to diesel, heating oil, natural gas, propane;

"Whereas lower gas prices are the only break recently to Ontario's middle class;

"Whereas Ontario already has gas taxes of 14.7 cents per litre plus 13% per litre HST and of course the federal excise tax of 10 cents a litre;

"We, the undersigned, emphatically say no to any new or additional gas taxes or carbon taxes imposed by the Wynne government."

I fully agree and will affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 19, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When the House last debated Bill 31 at second reading, the member for Burlington had the floor. I shall now ask for further debate.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you very much, Speaker. I welcome this debate in our Ontario Legislature on Bill 31. I think it's an important bill. Transportation is important, and obviously road safety is important.

In the province of Ontario, we've been building roads to get from A to B. I do know that, well before the present province of Ontario was established, roads have certainly been under construction going back for the last several hundred years. I know that my great-grandfather and my grandfather were responsible for Mill Road. At that time, you were responsible for the road in front of your farm. In the spring, out would come the horses and a scraper, and they would attempt to grade that road. I always considered it our road. Our home farm is still on Mill Road.

We build roads. It obviously fosters social life and, most importantly, economic life, but also designed and built—construction—to be as safe as possible.

In my riding over the last 12 years, there are several projects—provincial issues—that are long overdue. Particularly, I would like to briefly make reference, because we're talking about transportation, to the bypasses and bridges of Haldimand county. There are several projects. Studies have been done—ongoing debate over the years. We need a link from the Hamilton airport bypass down to the Caledonia bypass.

The reason I say that is primarily for reasons of safety: Old Highway 6, south of Hamilton, coming down Upper James south towards Caledonia, is a four-lane highway with no barrier in between. There have been some horrendous accidents and deaths on that stretch of highway; right around Haldibrook Road on provincial Highway 6. We need the construction of that bypass. I have a Ministry of Transportation map in my office that shows the planned bypass as a series of dotted lines, again, pretty well coming down from Hamilton airport to the Caledonia bypass bridge over the Grand River.

1340

We need a Hagersville truck bypass. Provincial Highway 6 comes right through town. It always has, ever since the inception of provincial Highway 6. With the heavy trucks, particularly steel, coming out of US Steel—again, the noise, the congestion and serious truck accidents that have occurred over the years, a number of them recently, right in downtown Hagersville. It's timely: I just received a report, a master's paper coming out of the University of Guelph authored by Wilrik Banda—he worked with me, the mayor and others on this report—outlining the complete story on the need for a Hagersville bypass.

A third major project that has been in abeyance for 12 years—in fact, it was about to begin back when I was a government member—is the Caledonia bridge over the Grand River, a 700-foot span, that was built back in 1927. It's long overdue for replacement. Again, it's limited: You can't put trucks over that. I don't think you can put a fire truck over that bridge. I'd be very worried about some of the heavy equipment going over a bridge

like that. Again, it's long overdue; certainly, over the last 12 years.

Another bridge is the Cayuga bridge. This is another very serious holdup. The Cayuga bridge was built in 1924. Again, it's long overdue for replacement. Granted, these bridges seem to be holding up. There have been repairs. But these major bridges on major provincial highways, across the Grand River, 700 or 800 feet long, are long overdue to be replaced.

I've stood out on the Cayuga bridge. In fact, the late Bob Baigent was quite a champion of replacing this 1924 bridge. He asked me to take the time someday to walk out on that bridge, stand in the middle of the bridge, wait for a heavy load of steel, a load of coil, to come along, and see what it does to that bridge.

Again, this legislation, to its credit, is all about safety. I support much of what's in this legislation. Again, the title of Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer—we have to get on with this.

There's a clear and present issue with the last project I mentioned, the Cayuga bridge. I stood in this House before Christmas and indicated that the Ontario Ministry of Transportation are doing their best to try to get around the delays with constructing the Cayuga bridge. The serious problem—and this is a justice issue; it's a law-and-order issue—is that the bridge periodically gets occupied by native activists from Six Nations. They take over the bridge. This has happened several times now. Construction workers, essentially, determine that discretion is better than valour, and they leave, oftentimes within minutes. That's downright dangerous. The last time this happened, the barge, the equipment, was down below in the bridge while winter was coming, and there was certain work that had to be done.

I do know that our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has been involved with this, but that's not good enough. I just reiterate my call today to Ontario's Minister of Community Safety; we need him down there as well. The Ministry of Transportation is trying. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs—again, I've observed this for the last nine years with respect to the Grand River and Caledonia and Cayuga—has been relatively ineffective.

I will point out that this coming Saturday, February 28—I regret to say this—is the ninth anniversary of the occupation of a very large subdivision in the town of Caledonia. That's nine years of mayhem, disorder, serious construction delays, and blockades.

I've distributed photographs to every member of this House of a group of native activists lifting a minivan over the side of a bridge and dropping it on the provincial highway down below. It was either on fire when they pushed it over the overpass or was set on fire down below. I have those photographs; it has been nine years. We talk about OPP investigations here. The OPP have had those photographs for nine years. Nobody has ever been charged with throwing this minivan off the overpass onto a provincial highway. This is what goes on down in Caledonia.

Because of this chill—and I see it as essentially political correctness run wild—we don't have action. We can't get anything done down there, and it's downright dangerous. I have had people phone me because their sister is in a coma in the hospital because native activists have shut down a highway like the bypass in Caledonia, and you get these godawful detours around back roads; however, people are still barrelling down these secondary roads at provincial highway speed.

The more that we can do, as this title suggests, under Bill 31 to make Ontario roads safer would serve my riding very well and would serve Haldimand county very well. All we ask is for the law to kick in and for these projects to kick forward.

Speaker, whether it be transportation or native protests on the highways or on the main street of Caledonia shutting down infrastructure projects, very simply all we ask is a return—I don't think it's too much to ask—to peace, order and good government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always happy to stand in this House and to talk about legislation that's happening, the effect that it will have on the province and our agreement or disagreement with what the Liberals are bringing forward or what the government is bringing forward.

There are a lot of good things in this bill that we're very supportive of, things like stiffer penalties for distracted driving. When I did my debate in this House, I talked in depth about the folks that we have seen driving distracted and the statistics that were brought forward regarding the amount of accidents that happen because of distracted driving. So I'm really happy to see that that's being addressed in this bill.

Drugged driving: We know that there are not proper measurements to test these folks yet for whether they're under the influence of drugs. Yes, we have measures to test for alcohol, but drugged driving is something that I'm definitely happy to see in this bill, and making sure that we have provisions to make sure that people are safe on the streets.

New legislation for cycling: A one-metre distance is a good thing, making sure that—it's your bill, right?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's our bill.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's our bill. The member from Parkdale–High Park is just saying that that's our bill. That's something the New Democrats have pushed for, and we're happy to see that it's in this bill.

What else? One of the problems that I see with this bill is on the 407 and how it weakens the notification process for the 407. We know that sometimes a bill could be missed in the mail, or something could happen. The 407 seems to have all the ability of law to just wreak havoc on a person's world. I'm sorry to see that that's in here.

Thank you, Speaker; I appreciated the time.

1350

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to stand up and talk for a few minutes about Bill 31, which makes a large number of amendments to various traffic legislation. I agree with the member from Hamilton Mountain that there are really a lot of good things in here.

From the point of view of a Minister of Education, one thing that may not have gotten a lot of notice is the fact that there is a prohibition on any bus other than a school bus being painted that classic chrome yellow, because we want the public to be aware, when they see a bus and it's painted chrome yellow, to have absolute certainty that it's a school bus, not something that maybe isn't a school bus. It will make it clear that only school buses can use that classic paint colour.

In a time when we're also encouraging children to walk or bike to school, it's also good to see the traffic rules around people who are cycling being toughened up a little bit, such as requiring drivers to give a metre when passing; making it clearer that it's actually legal to drive your bike on paved shoulders, other than on the controlled-access highways and the 400 series; and increasing penalties if you're a person who opens a door without checking and doors a cyclist, as people in the cycling community would call it. It's great to see some of those amendments in there.

One that has always been a problem in our constituency office has been trying to bring some clarity around the whole issue of people who have medical conditions, which leads to a loss of licence.

We need to get on with passing this, because there are so many good amendments in here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to speak at length a little bit later this afternoon on a number of items in here, but I really want to bring out one that resonates with me a lot: the emergency vehicles. It says, "We support the requirement of all drivers to move into another lane when approaching stopped emergency vehicles and tow trucks with flashing lights."

I'd like to commend our PC caucus colleague Garfield Dunlop for bringing the government's attention to this issue with his "slow down, move over" private member's bill. It's certainly something where, particularly for our younger generation, I'm not certain at times that they really have had the experience to understand that, when you see the flashing lights—in our case, there are a lot of volunteer fire departments that have green flashing lights, and it's something that is law. It is legislation that they should be doing it.

Sadly, I was down in the Windsor area just after Christmas for a family friend's father's funeral, and I was so impressed and so struck by how many cars actually pulled over as the funeral procession was going by. That's not something that's legislated; that, to me, is just good common courtesy and respect for the person who had passed. It was just so striking to see all the people—almost every car actually did that and allowed the whole funeral procession to go by.

But it raises the issue, again, of the green lights. Our volunteers—those men and women who volunteer in our fire departments out in rural Ontario—come out and put their life on the line. They're speeding to try to get to, perhaps, your loved one—you are injured; your house is on fire—and people are pulling over and ensuring that they can do that, so they can go on unimpeded and get there as quickly as possible. That's certainly one that I like to see in here.

There are a number of good points in this bill. I'm going to speak to them. It's almost like an omnibus bill. I think there are about nine different categories, so I'm not going to be able to cover them all.

My colleague so aptly brought up—I think one of his main tenets is general law and order, to make it safer for everyone in our community. I think we need to do that. I think we need to go back to basics. Having said that, I also want to make sure that we're not making more regulations, red tape and administrative burdens for the people of Ontario, but to be an efficient and safe province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my distinct honour, of course, to rise in the Legislature and speak on Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act. Any time that we have the chance to make our communities safer, that's an important conversation to have.

My colleague made the comment that this is almost an omnibus bill. This bill crams a whole lot of different ideas in here and, as we read through it, a number of different recommendations. For example, the CAA has been pushing for this "slow down, move over" piece for a long time. So it's important to see that many of these recommendations are being pulled in and factored in.

When we're talking about communities and safety—as we know, I come from the public education world. School zones and crosswalks are right outside our front door. There's a piece in this bill that strengthens the distinct visual identity of school buses, and that's an important piece. No part of a bus other than a school bus can be painted that chrome yellow that we all know and recognize and identify.

From slowing down and moving over to bus safety—we cover a number of things in this bill. Also, distracted driving: The OPP says it's our number one killer.

I'll tell you a story, and I probably shouldn't. I may have had a speeding ticket in my day. I may have, once or twice, had a speeding ticket. But being in a room making my case and hearing those around me, everyone else in that room, with maybe one or two exceptions, was there because of distracted driving. That really drove it home, if you'll pardon the expression, that this needs to be a priority, and we're glad to see this in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I

return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thanks, Speaker. I appreciate the actually quite diverse comments in return—and again, given the nature of what has been described as somewhat of an omnibus bill. It's an important issue. It's an important bill to keep moving forward through debate.

Canada was not built by people who were afraid to take on challenges, especially with our road and bridge projects and other infrastructure. Imagine Canada, for example, without the Trans-Canada Highway. I guess it was in the early 1960s that that link was made. I remember that our father drove us up there to show us where the road ended; you couldn't get to the other side of Ontario from there. The Canadian Pacific Railway: That was a mammoth project where politicians and everybody pulled together. Pipelines, infrastructure, water and sewer, upgrades to rail, sea links and road links—all important to pull us together, our social cohesion, and important for manufacturing and agribusiness and our primary industries.

My concern: the distraction, to put it mildly, of wasteful spending that takes away money from capital projects, a situation where we know of the horrendous debt in the province of Ontario; money that is being borrowed, essentially, for the day-to-day operation of this province to meet the payroll, to meet the pension obligations. Normally, one would expect government to borrow money, obviously, for a crisis or what have you. You would expect this money to be borrowed for infrastructure projects like roads, not just to meet the payroll.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a great pleasure for me to rise in this House, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to join the debate on Bill C-31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act. This is a very comprehensive bill that brings together two previous pieces of legislation that were introduced in the last Parliament but not passed: the Highway Traffic Statute Law Amendment Act, which gave municipalities additional tools to collect defaulted traffic fines from drivers; and the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, which included provisions to enhance pedestrian, driver and cyclist safety.

In addition, Bill 31 includes important new measures to deal with drugged driving as well as stiffer penalties for distracted driving, which has become the number one killer on Ontario's roads, as we hear from the OPP.

1400

Since I have limited time for debate today, I won't be able to speak to all the provisions of the bill, but I did want to highlight a couple of aspects that are particularly significant for my community. Those are the cycling safety provisions, which were originally introduced by my NDP colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park, and municipal traffic fine collection.

There is great work going on in my community to promote cycling and encourage more Londoners to cycle.

The Medway Working Group has been working hard on a plan to identify and address barriers to active transportation, including, of course, cycling. Earlier this month, the city of London launched its rapid transit initiative, Shift, a plan that will also map safe cycling routes throughout the city.

This Friday there is going to be a mapping party organized by London Cycle Link to engage the community in planning London's new bicycle routes. Of course, provincial legislation to ensure the safety of cyclists is vital to support and strengthen and grow these local initiatives.

The other part of the bill that is critical for London, as well as communities across the province, are the new tools for municipalities to collect unpaid fines. We heard during pre-budget hearings from the mayor of London about the millions in unpaid traffic fines that are owed to the city. Certainly, municipalities need these tools, and the bill is a good step to streamline the process. We, on this side of the House, do have some questions about how the bill will enable the collection of fines from out-of-province drivers, and how it will enable the sharing of information across ministries.

I'm going to use the remainder of my time to focus on the section of Bill 31 that clarifies doctors' and optometrists' obligations regarding medical licence suspensions. My reason for focusing on this section of the act is the increasing number of phone calls and emails I've been getting from constituents about unacceptably long wait times for people to get their driver's licences reinstated after they've received a clean bill of health from their medical professional. This is a matter that is critical to my constituents in London West, especially those who rely on their vehicles for employment.

Bill 31 includes regulations to prescribe which medical professionals must support a medical condition and which medical conditions must be supported. Clearly, clarifying these responsibilities is a welcome improvement over the current situation, which is open-ended about responsibilities for reporting the medical conditions that may make it dangerous for a person to drive. My main concern, as I mentioned, is that the bill does not do anything to address the other issue related to medical licence suspensions: the wait times once the medical condition has been resolved.

The ministry currently says that their target service standard is four weeks for a driver to get their licence back after a medical suspension. The ministry says that they hit this service standard 85% to 90% of the time. I can't speak for the other members of this House and what is happening in the rest of the province, but I can tell you that in London West the ministry is not even coming close to meeting that target.

I'd like to share with this House the stories of some of my constituents whose jobs and ability to earn a living have been put directly at risk because they have been forced to wait months and months for the ministry to reissue their driver's licences.

My first example is Dave Wilson, a transit driver who had a medical issue that resulted in his class C commercial licence being downgraded to a class G. Dave was required to serve a waiting period while his medical condition was being treated. When his waiting period ended, in October 2014, Dave contacted the ministry to ask what was required from the medical review section to get his licence reinstated.

He was told he needed a letter from his doctor. So he promptly went to his doctor, got the letter and faxed it to the ministry. Two months later, Dave received a letter from the ministry saying he, in fact, needed a full medical as well as many other forms to be completed by his doctor.

Now, why did the ministry not give Dave that information the first time, when he inquired in October about what he needed to do? Dave immediately faxed the medical reports that were required from his physician to the ministry, but it then took numerous inquiries from my office before he finally received a letter from the Ministry of Transportation giving him leave to reapply for his class C commercial licence.

Speaker, it took more than four months for Dave to get the okay to begin the process of having his licence reinstated. Over that period, Dave's employer became concerned about the length of time it was taking for the reinstatement of his licence. Dave worried that he could lose his job. Four months is a completely unacceptable length of time for someone to wait, especially when they are as diligent as Dave was in terms of contacting the ministry to find out what the next steps were in the process.

My second example is Peter Hanford, owner of Hanford's Tire and Service, located in London West. Peter experienced a medical issue in September 2014 which resulted in his licence getting a medical suspension. In November, Peter's physician gave him the green light. He submitted his health information to the ministry. He was obviously anxious to get his licence reinstated. He made numerous attempts to contact the MTO and was often forced to wait in an answering machine queue for longer than an hour. All he wanted to do was find out why he had not heard back from the ministry about the status of his licence.

My office also became involved, inquiring with the ministry about the status of Peter's case. Two months later, my office received a response from the ministry indicating that more medical information was required. Again, this is well beyond the 30-day ministry service standard response time. So we're now nearing the end of February—remember that this issue first started in September 2014—and Peter Hanford's situation has yet to be resolved.

Peter has described the process of having his licence reinstated as "excruciating." He says it has been "impossible to get information about what is required from the MTO."

A third example—yet another example—is Steve Everett, who has also experienced long delays, along

with the ministry misplacing his medical records while he's been dealing with the medical review section of the Ministry of Transportation. Steve had a job offer and has come very close to losing out on his ability to get employment because of the ministry's delays, through no fault of his own.

These are just a few of the stories I've been hearing from my constituents. They highlight the fact that unacceptably long wait times at the MTO are jeopardizing people's ability to find and maintain employment.

Certainly Bill 31 is an important piece of legislation. We're glad to see it move forward. But I'm also concerned that it does not address the serious issue I have raised about wait times at the ministry. The ministry's practice of conducting reviews on a first-come, first-served basis does not take into account the impact on people who depend on their vehicle for employment or basic mobility.

I look forward to a response from the Minister of Transportation about the concerns I have raised today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's my privilege to address Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act. There are, of course, many, many different components regarding this bill, whether we're dealing with impaired driving—whether it's due to alcohol, drugs—enforcement issues or demerit points. Perhaps I might, just for a moment, as a physician parliamentarian, speak a little bit about the medical aspects.

There are, in the course of medical practice many, many different conditions that can affect the ability to drive, whether it's related to eyesight or drug addictions, drug dependence and, of course, alcoholism; but even, perhaps, hidden conditions, conditions you may not really recognize if you just meet an individual, whether, for example, it's the predisposition to have low sugar attacks, or hypoglycemia, in insulin-dependent diabetics—or even individuals who have conditions such as epilepsy.

1410

So I think it's very important that physicians out there who are counselling, treating, and catering to their patients' needs let them know that this is one more aspect of counselling they should be aware of. It's probably not, generally speaking, really part of a standardized medical history to get a "driving" history, but as these conditions occur on a very frequent basis, and as many of these conditions can be hidden, I will use this opportunity, as I said, to let Ontarians know—and of course my physician colleagues particularly—that this this is an aspect that needs to be catered to. As well, perhaps, hopefully directly, addressing some of the concerns which are of course very legitimate, I think we've all had the experience of attempting to communicate with various ministries and having things disappear into the vortex. But I think this is yet another aspect.

The reinstatement of your licence after a medical condition has precluded it is, I think, something that of course we will devote our attention to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to the member from London West's comments on this bill.

Being from the country, I've had to get used to the bicycle business in Toronto since I've lived here. Most cyclists take their time and try to obey the rules of the road, but I find some interesting things in here on the bicycle business.

One of them is that bicyclists will be required to obey bicycle traffic control signals, which are something the government proposes doing. I would suggest that if bicycles enjoyed the rules of the road, period, they wouldn't have to worry about bicycle signals, as I read this bill.

The other one is that this bill amends the act to remove the prohibition against riding or operating a bicycle on a crosswalk. I myself would like that to be struck out. I think it's very important that on crosswalks, if they're going across the street or whatever they're doing around a crosswalk, they should dismount their bike. I've had to dodge them out here when I have come down Wellesley Street when they're fooling around in these crosswalks riding their bicycles.

Something that I think is very serious in this bill is the one metre between a vehicle and a bicycle when a motor vehicle is passing a bicycle. It says at least one metre. I would suggest that for large transport trucks going by bicycles, especially out in the country, that are going at the speed limit, one metre isn't enough because they can be sucked into these things. I think the government should rethink that one a little bit.

I think this bill was made for the city, not so much for the country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's my privilege to speak to my caucus colleague the member from London West and the thoughtful debate she put forward. She talked about the cycling that was brought forward by our colleague from Parkdale-High Park, and she talked about a city being able to collect the fines, but I want to focus more on the MTO and the medical review portion.

She talked about her constituent Dave and the more than four months he had to wait to get his licence back after his doctor had approved him to be healthy enough to drive. He was being proactive, asking questions, but he still wasn't getting the proper answers until it was way far into the time. She talked about Peter; she talked about Steve.

Speaker, I have spoken in this House about residents of mine who came through my office with the exact same issues. The problem is, they're sitting on the queue, as the member from London West had said, for an insurmountable time. They're waiting so long before they are even getting to the point of frustration for them to be coming to our offices. When they get to our offices, our staff are calling, trying to get the MTO to move quicker,

but as she said, it's on a first-come, first-served basis. You have to wait until the proper table is there to speak in regard to your issue when yet they have a doctor's note—the same doctor who took them off of their licence and said that they can't drive doesn't have the qualifications, I guess, would be the concerns of the Ministry of Transportation, to be able to say that the person can have their licence back. If they're good enough to say that they can take it away, why is it that a doctor cannot reinstate their licence? Why do we have to go months and months on end to be able to get these licences back for our constituents? Quite frankly, it could just as well make them lose their job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to speak for two minutes on the comments made by the member of London West. The bill, entitled the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer), 2014, addresses quite a few issues regarding driving, bicycling and the fines related therein.

The first point, I think—this maybe addresses some of the issues that were brought up by the member who spoke on this issue—is that there are more cars, more bicycles, more motorcycles, mopeds and other vehicles on the road than ever before. There has been a tremendous increase in that.

I live in Scarborough. Everyone in Scarborough has to have a car, a bicycle or a motorcycle to move into downtown Toronto or to commute to work. People don't want to wait for the bus service or a taxi drive; they'd rather drive or take a bicycle or some other way of transportation downtown. I've seen this all throughout the city, and even when you drive outside of the city: that there are a lot of vehicles out there and it's getting more and more distracted. I've noticed more people texting and more people on their phones even though it's prohibited—distracted drivers who pay more attention to their phone in front of them than to the road that's in front of them. Instead, they look at their texting, or they're messaging or they call someone and they get on the phone. It's very distracting.

This bill increases the fines and makes it a bit stricter. There have been a lot of accidents on roads. It's easier to hit someone when you're distracted—either on a bicycle or a pedestrian. It happens all the time in my riding and happens all throughout Ontario. I've noticed, in my area of Scarborough Southwest, almost every weekend someone gets hit on the road, usually fatally. So this bill at least addresses and improves the conditions that presently exist outside on the roads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We now return to the member for London West for her reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members for Etobicoke North, Perth-Wellington, Hamilton Mountain and Scarborough Southwest for their comments on my remarks.

There were a couple of issues raised that I want in particular to highlight. I was encouraged to hear from the member from Etobicoke North acknowledging the legitimate concerns that I raised in my remarks about the bottleneck at the medical review section of the Ministry of Transportation and the serious impact that this is having on people in this province.

Certainly, I also appreciate the stories that were shared with us by the member for Hamilton Mountain about what she's hearing from her constituents, who are experiencing similar delays—months and months waiting for their licence to be reinstated and the potential risk that this creates on their ability to maintain their employment.

I wanted to respond to the member from Perth-Wellington. He talked about bicycle safety provisions and questioned the relevance of those provisions. Members may be interested in knowing, in fact, that the Ontario coroner had called for much more stringent conditions and had called on the government to go further and include mandatory truck side guards to protect cyclists and pedestrians. That call was repeated in reports in 2010, 2012 and 2013. So, clearly, there is a need for bicycle safety provisions to protect both cyclists and pedestrians.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a few comments on the record regarding Bill 31. It's a great chance for me to join and speak about issues in my riding of Leeds-Grenville.

I don't have the largest riding in terms of the 107, but I do represent a largely rural area, and I have more than 3,000 kilometres of roads. So I speak to you in that regard. I have to tell you, though, Speaker—and you were up in our neck of the woods on Saturday—that I think I was probably over a lot of those 3,000 kilometres of roads with my events.

Our riding, outside of the city of Brockville, does not have a public transportation system. There's no subway or streetcar that gets you from Lyndhurst to Delta to Spencerville to Oxford Mills. It's a predominantly rural riding, outside of Brockville. The majority of residents in Leeds and Grenville—their public transportation is the roads and the bridges that we all drive every day. They are really the lifeline for people to get to work, school, medical appointments, and they allow businesses to move products and get customers to their front door.

A bill that deals with road safety, whether you are looking at it from the perspective of a motorist or a cyclist or a pedestrian, is very important to the citizens of Leeds-Grenville. I think I'm being fair. There are some positive initiatives that I see in this legislation to make our roads safer. I'm going to get into those shortly in my address.

I do want to make one note before we get started, though. Although we have been back here at Queen's Park for just a week, this is the first opportunity that I've had to speak on a government bill—not that I've been

quiet in the Legislature. I've had plenty of things to say in question period about the shameful conduct of the Premier and her government in the unprecedented report that was tabled last Thursday by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Speaker, one of the centrepieces in Bill 31 is that it takes steps towards getting tough on distracted driving. We all know that when you're behind the wheel, you have to be focused on what's in front of you. I only wish that I could get some piece of legislation to penalize the Premier for distracted governing. That's what I'll call it. Like a distracted driver behind the wheel, the Premier, I think, is an accident waiting to happen. The problem is, she's taking the people of Ontario along for the ride. If I was going to give the Premier some demerit points for every scandal that came out of her office, I would have taken her licence away and thrown the keys aside a long, long time ago.

But, you know, Speaker, let me get back to Bill 31—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to return to Bill 31 and confine his remarks to the bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased, Speaker, to go back. Bill 31 is a broad piece of legislation that's going to usher in a number of changes. As I said earlier, some of them are welcome and are already having good debate in the Legislature. I know that many of our municipal partners—mayors, councillors from all over rural Ontario are here in Toronto this week for the annual ROMA/OGRA conference, affectionately called Good Roads. I know many of them are interested in the bill, and that's because the legislation finally provides some help for those municipalities to collect on the millions of dollars—and some may suggest it's upwards of \$1 billion—in unpaid fines from delinquent drivers. It's something that they have been raising for years in meetings here at the Good Roads conference at the Royal York and also at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. So finally some of those municipalities can look at their colleagues and say that they're finally getting some action on that very important item.

Right now, if a motorist decides that they're going to toss away the ticket for a traffic or parking offence and ignore the fine, the municipalities—and in my riding that would be the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville—are really left in the lurch. They've got really no mechanism that's available to them to get that driver and force them to pay up. So Bill 31 does address this by ensuring that any driver in default on the payment of the fine can't renew their licence plate. I know there have been many other speakers that have addressed it.

I know that my warden of the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, David Gordon, and his colleagues on counties' council in Leeds and Grenville welcome the bill on that particular aspect regarding the fines.

When I speak to people back home, the item that they always mention about Bill 31 is certainly the distracted

driving component. It's a huge issue, especially for young people, new drivers on the road. We all know that cellphones and other hand-held devices have become so very prevalent in our society. I know that the member for Ottawa South, when he was speaking on that bill, could barely contain himself. He was holding his cellphone up. He gave a great example of why this component of the bill is so important, because many of our constituents are attached to their cellphones.

There have been many tragedies on the road, unfortunately, because of distracted driving. Some of the members have presented statistics. I heard a number of times the issue that back in 2013, 78 people lost their lives due to distracted driving claims. So there have been some unnecessary deaths.

I want to talk about an event that had some public awareness in my riding about a year ago. I was honoured to go to one of my local high schools, Brockville Collegiate Institute, for the launch of their Celebrate My Drive campaign. It was with the folks from the Brockville State Farm office. It was a really good event, and it was an even better event because the campaign that the school got involved in ended up getting them \$25,000. They were motivated with that program because they wanted to honour one of their late classmates, Aaron Stevenson. He was a beloved student at BCI who lost his life when he was struck by a vehicle while skateboarding. It was a horrific hit-and-run incident just weeks before the start of the school year. So this road safety aspect—the school won \$25,000. Part of the funds were used to encourage the use of reflective tape for skateboarders and to help defray the cost of driver education for students who really couldn't afford to pay for it. So even in this tragedy, the legacy that the classmates had for their friend Aaron and the lessons for students really turned their grief into a very, very powerful force for good. I wanted to tell that story on the record, Speaker.

I also want to get back to the distracted driving portion. As we all know, the bill increases the fine for using a hand-held device, up to \$300 to \$1,000 from the current \$60 to \$500, and I think that's a very good portion to start.

I know the minister has talked about bringing in a three-demerit-point penalty for distracted driving. I'm disappointed, though, that there's no mention of that in the legislation, nor has the minister used the authority he has to bring it forward in regulation. I am disappointed about that.

In his leadoff, though—I want to give credit to my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, our transportation critic, who touched on the fact so much of Bill 31 has been left to regulations. Certainly that's a concern, because it's never good to give this government a blank cheque. So I applaud him for putting those comments on the record. We all know that in a bill like this, the devil in the legislation is in the details. Many of them remain unknown. I've had a number of questions about the bill from my constituents. There is a number of them who are very concerned about sections of the legislation

dealing with the vehicle inspection centre system, and I can tell you, Speaker, you can add me to the list of skeptics.

I'm very worried about how the government will go about dealing with what are admittedly some very real concerns about unrepaired vehicles on our roads. We need to look no further than to the Drive Clean program, which continues to gouge motorists even after it has been shown that that program now does not deal with the emissions side. The last thing motorists need—besides a carbon tax—is a mandatory, costly vehicle inspection scheme. I'm troubled about that.

1430

Speaker, I've got some other things I want to get on the record in my final two minutes, and I want to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to speak for a few minutes to the remarks that were offered by the member for Leeds–Grenville. Before I do that, however, I would like to correct my record. In my earlier remarks I referred to the legislation as C-31; obviously it is G31, so if that correction could be made I would appreciate that.

The member for Leeds–Grenville raised some important issues. The issues that he highlighted from the bill were important to the people of this province. In particular, he talked about municipal fine collection and the estimated up to \$1 billion that is outstanding to municipalities in uncollected traffic fines. This is a concern because of the use that those dollars could be put to at the municipal level.

He also talked about the danger of legislation putting too much power in regulations, because that of course leaves it open-ended for the government to change regulations, without the fulsome debate that we are able to have here on the floor of this Legislature.

He emphasized the importance of taking action to reduce distracted driving. Those of us who have young people in our families know how addicted young people are to their devices, so the graduated licensing system, demerit points and increased fines will hopefully help to address that.

Finally, he also raised the red flag about outsourcing motor vehicle inspection, which is a concern I also share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this very important and, indeed, life-saving bill.

For the last 13 years, Ontario has been ranked number one or number two of all North American jurisdictions when it comes to road safety. Of the 60-plus jurisdictions in North America, Ontario is right at the top, but that doesn't mean that we can be complacent. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't continue to improve road safety and, indeed, save lives.

This bill takes me back to my teenage years—way, way back to my teenage years—when drinking and driving was something that was pretty normal. That culture, of course, has changed tremendously. My kids would not dream of drinking and driving, or going in a car with someone who had been drinking. I think the issue of today is distracted driving, and I'm very, very pleased, as I think of people who I know personally who have been in near-death accidents as a result of distracted driving. I think increasing the fine significantly and adding demerit points for distracted driving is what we need to do.

The current fines range from \$60 to \$500. This legislation will increase that to from \$300 to \$1,000, which is a very substantial fine, but not just money; people will lose three demerit points. I think all drivers jealously protect our demerit points—we do not want to lose that licence.

This is important legislation. I am delighted that, from the sound of things, there is actually harmony in the House this afternoon as we all speak to why this is important and positive legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour again to rise in this Legislature. I just want to talk to Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act.

I specifically want to talk to distracted driving. We see it everywhere, and I suspect there may be one or two legislators in this hallowed sanctuary who have on occasion been somewhat distracted, perhaps, by a cellphone call unless they have Bluetooth or something along that line.

The detachment will remain anonymous at this point in time, but I did go on a ride-along with a specific detachment. While we were cruising at about 115 kilometres an hour down the 401, suddenly he spots a licence that he decides he's going to key in. What is he going to do? Key into what? Into the onboard computer that he has, but it's not a voice-activated onboard computer. No, while he's driving he actually has to look at this computer and punch in the licence plate of the vehicle that he wants to inquire about. It made me a little bit nervous, to the point where I said, "May I help you with this, and do you mind showing me how you data-enter the licence plate so that I can do it for you while you keep both hands on the steering wheel?" Which he did.

As the community safety critic, recognizing that we need to keep our roads safe, I concur. But you know what? If I recall, the former Minister of Transportation in the last Parliament may have introduced something similar along these lines on distracted driving and introduced a fine of—I think it was up to \$500. Now the fines are going even higher. Was that to punish more, or was that because we are dealing with an extremely cash-strapped government that is looking for more ways to squeeze the taxpayers of Ontario?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to stand and speak to this Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act etc. I'm not going to read that because I don't want to take up my time reading the title.

In my previous life I was an insurance broker, and many, many times, this is a topic—auto insurance and tickets—that co-related. There were various examples where people had called and talked about—they've had a lot of speeding tickets, or the classification of a ticket can actually be very significant on your insurance record. The frequency of tickets can also be very significant on your insurance record.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I see one of the members from the opposite party saying, "Yes, if you get three tickets." That's right: Three strikes and you're out. You could have three minor speeding tickets and you're going to be, perhaps, losing a discount, getting your driving record amended and that kind of thing.

Regardless of that, this is a good bill because we do need to have better laws and safer roads when it comes to how we deliver safety on our roads. We want to make sure, when we are travelling, that the person who has that distractive device gets that message: that when they're caught, it's going to be expensive. When you hit people in their pockets, they usually pay attention and they stop that behaviour.

It's a good thing that distracted driving is in there. It's something that has come full circle in this generation. We're all using devices. So it's something that needed to be addressed, and I'm glad to see that it is here and we're doing something about it. We're taking steps to make sure that our roads are safer, and people are going to stand up and pay attention that they shouldn't be using their devices when they're driving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank all the honourable members for their words of encouragement and support for my address this afternoon.

I also want to put just a few final comments on the record. Aside from hydro bill complaints, probably the number two reason that people call my office is the current medical review system. From delays processing medical information to licences being needlessly taken away, my constituency staff are constantly dealing with frustrated residents of Leeds–Grenville on this matter. The minister really should have outlined how he plans to fix the current review system before taking steps to increase the number of drivers who will be caught in it.

1440

Just in closing, I want to give a shout-out to two of my colleagues here in the PC caucus who have made contributions to this bill. I'm pleased that the member for Simcoe North's "slow down, move over" private member's bill to protect tow truck drivers has made it to be part of Bill 31. They put their lives at risk when they stop to help a stranded motorist. It's important that they have

the same protection as other emergency responders when stopped on the roadside. The bill also adopts some of the bicycle safety provisions of our caucus's resident cycling advocate, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. His bill would allow cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of certain designated highways.

Both of these members have done a tremendous job with these private members' bills, and I really want to thank the minister for adopting their ideas as part of this bill. Frankly, adopting PMBs that we debate and pass on Thursdays into government legislation is something I'd personally like to see happen a lot more often in the House. We all have good ideas for legislation. These are two of them from our caucus. Again, I want to take the opportunity to thank Mr. Dunlop and Mr. Miller for those wonderful suggestions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for London—sorry, Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

I rise today to speak to Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act. Speaker, others have made comments already about some of the useful provisions that are in this act: the requirement of a one-metre distance between a vehicle and a bicycle—that improves road safety; action on drugged driving—that obviously is an advance and a plus that most people in Ontario can support. But I want to say as well that there are a variety of missed opportunities in this bill that I hope will be addressed at the committee stage. I have to say this bill doesn't deal with the fallout from privatization and the growing lack of accountability that comes with the privatization of motor vehicle administration or regulation. It undermines the ability of the public to hold authorities to account.

I want to speak about specific sections in this bill. First, with regard to motor vehicle inspection centres, currently the province licenses and oversees private motor vehicle inspection centres, which certify regular passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles. Fair enough, Speaker. I think that's something that should be done by government; I don't think it should be contracted out.

I note that in 2008, the Auditor General found serious flaws in the commercial vehicle inspection system, observing that "the ministry does not exercise adequate oversight of this process and has little effective control over the issuance of safety standard certificates to inspection stations. We therefore questioned whether the ministry has adequate assurance that this certification process ensures the mechanical safety of commercial vehicles."

Speaker, that's a very alarming and substantive statement. If we have motor vehicle inspection stations that are there to ensure that as we are travelling on a bus or driving down the road beside a truck, we are not going to be subjected to an accident because that vehicle that we're in or beside is unsafe, one would expect that the government would want to have, if not outright ownership, which I would recommend, much tighter control over this particular aspect of motor vehicle regulation.

But in fact the bill is going to enhance the distance between public accountability and control and these vehicle inspection stations. The bill repeals sections 86 and 88 to 100 of the Highway Traffic Act, and adds new sections enabling broad regulations to replace the current system with a completely new system under an unspecified model. The deputy minister has confirmed that a private, delegated administrative authority model is under consideration and that the spectrum of delegated models could include completely divested.

Speaker, people throughout this province, and legislators throughout this chamber, have had to deal with condominium problems, have had to deal with people whose interaction with Taronis, a regulator that has essentially been taken out of the control of this Legislature—they've had to deal with that agency when they've had problems with their condominiums.

I have to tell you, Speaker, that I have many new condo owners in my riding who are not happy with an agency they cannot access, and that runs itself for its own interest. If we were to follow that road, as it were, with this particular part of road safety regulation, we would be making a grave error.

The bill specifies that the administrator of the new vehicle inspection centre system is "not an agent of the crown," and thus wouldn't be subject to normal oversight by the government agencies committee, the Ombudsman or the Auditor General, unless the service agreement with the ministry allows for such oversight.

If we have a situation in which we've had a history of problems, a history of failure of accountability, one doesn't go further into that particular problem; one doesn't deepen the problem. One tries to correct it. What the government is doing with this section of the bill is making it very difficult for us as legislators—for us as citizens—to actually correct problems that exist in motor vehicle inspections.

Why on earth that would be an object of this bill is beyond me. Has the government not learned from other privatization and deregulation experiences? Apparently not. This is an element that cries out to be dealt with when we get to committee. It needs to be amended.

I want to talk, as well, about Highway 407. For those who need a little background, the Highway 407 toll highway opened in 1997. In 1999, in order to address an \$11-billion deficit, the Conservative government leased the highway for 99 years to a private operator, in exchange for \$3.1 billion. In 2013, the 407 ETR reported revenues of \$801.2 million and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization of \$664.8 million. It's a goldmine, a long, linear, wide goldmine.

In 2012, as part of the budget bill, the government enacted the Highway 407 East Act to govern the eastern extension of the 407 currently under construction. The new "public" 407 East toll highway will be a P3, operated and maintained for 30 years by mostly the same private companies that run the 407 ETR. Under the agreement between the government and the private operator of the 407 ETR, the registrar of motor vehicles

is required to deny licence plate renewals after being notified by the 407 that a driver has not paid their bills.

Collection tactics of the 407 have become quite ruthless. They've fought controversial court battles, seeking the right to collect 15-year-old invoices from drivers, including the legally bankrupt, while charging exorbitant compounded interest rates. In some cases, these drivers may have long since forgotten the invoice, assuming they even received it—and one can't be sure they received it—and are shocked when their licence plate renewal is suddenly denied by the government for failure to pay an old bill that may have ballooned to 30 times the amount of the original invoice after the interest is added on.

Under the legislation, the 407 may notify the registrar after a bill has been unpaid for 90 days, but is not obliged to. The 407 charges annual interest rates of over 25%—amazing. Over 25%. They could be running credit card companies.

A court has ruled that the statute of limitations for collecting unpaid toll bills applies only after the registrar has been notified, allowing the 407 the option of delaying notification while piling up interest charges. In some cases, toll charges were mistaken or were incurred by long-dead parents or ex-spouses.

1450

When the Highway 407 East Act was enacted in 2012 as part of the budget bill, the NDP demanded amendments that would require the registrar of motor vehicles to notify drivers via registered mail or bonded courier that their plate renewal was about to be denied. This was to guarantee proper notification in cases where the 407 invoice had gone to the wrong address or had somehow been diverted from the true private owner.

The bill before us, Bill 31, removes this notification requirement. Why would we do that? People can be stuck with bills on which the interest rate is 25%. The company is not required to deliver that invoice in a secure manner, thus opening people up to huge liability for bills that have compound interest set at 25%. It's extraordinary. It is extraordinary, Speaker.

Another element in this bill relates to Serco, the privatized company that does driver's licence examinations. They were on strike in 2009. At the time, I was the critic. I talked about how the contracting out of Serco had led to huge problems with the public, and it had. In November 2014, the Star reported that Serco's new contract allows it to self-police and self-report, and these reports are kept secret. The Star reported on loopholes that allowed unregulated licence mills to train truck drivers with no ministry oversight. That could have been corrected with this bill, and it has not been. That needs to be amended.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard this bill complimented on so many occasions, I'm wondering why we're continuing to debate it and really believe we should get this to committee as quickly as possible.

But I did want to touch on one aspect of the previous member's discussion about Highway 407. It seems to

me—and I'll have to go back and look this up—that the path to privatization of 407 actually began with the NDP. There was something the NDP did in this regard. I'll go back and look at what it was. I remember I was questioning it at the time, surprised that the NDP would do it.

But they didn't sell it. I'm glad the member mentioned in his speech the sale of Highway 407, essentially a fire sale, as he will recall, because they wanted to show a balanced budget. This is what happens when governments fall over themselves trying to find a way to artificially balance a budget. In 1999, going into the election, they wanted to show that they could balance a budget, so they had a fire sale. A European country bought it and has been making money hand over fist ever since. The member was correct when he said that: They've been making money hand over fist ever since.

I always wanted to see an investigation of this, because I always hear about government records. I think what happened was that all the records about this sale went into the shredder when the previous Harris government left office. You will remember this, Mr. Speaker. The shredding machines were going—they were burning out outside the building. So we don't have any record of it, except people do know that the Conservative government sold Highway 407 for a song.

Now the money from the tolls on the extension is going back to the taxpayer and will be able to provide services, instead of going to some foreign company.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to go there, but being as the Chair of Cabinet opened it up, if there was a song that went along to this and the Liberals were singing it, it's probably Who's Sorry Now. But anyway, I was surprised when he brought up deletions. Now you do deletions; maybe in the old days it was something about shredders. But I'm surprised that the minister would go there and talk about that. I think that would be what we would talk about: that if it was a song, it would be Who's Sorry Now, and it would be the Liberals who would be singing that.

Interjection: Ontario taxpayers, for the most part.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, the Ontario taxpayers are the ones who are sorry now, if you were to ask them. They've got buyer's remorse. Being as we're on that subject, they probably have buyer's remorse, and if they had the opportunity, they would probably go back and say that. The Chair of Cabinet, the minister, brought it up, so I'm glad he opened that door.

One of the issues that's in there that I see is demerit points. The devil is in the details, and we're concerned that leaving a lot of this to regulations, there could be things that fall through the cracks. We're worried—and I know the minister would certainly understand this—that this could be just another Drive Clean 2.0. We're going there. It could just be another cash grab.

One thing we do like: I know back in Sarnia-Lambton, the part about collecting unpaid fines—I'd like to know more about that. That's certainly an issue. Back in my

municipality, I know there are a lot of unpaid fines, and I'm sure that across Ontario that would be an issue, so I wouldn't be against that.

I also support the introduction of licence suspension and impoundment of cars that have been found to have the driving ignition interlock disconnected. I think that's important. People who have had that impairment put against them because of drunk driving, drugs or whatever need to be obligated—I know people have had to exist with that and learn to live with it; most of them have learned their lesson, because it's very inconvenient.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the rest of the debate. Maybe the minister will bring up some more things and we can talk about the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member from Toronto-Danforth on his remarks. He asked a very important question: Has this government learned nothing from the experience of privatization and deregulation? Certainly we saw the Liberals follow right in the path of the PCs in terms of privatizing, deregulating and outsourcing, and we know that the most recent Auditor General's report said that there was an \$8-billion cost to taxpayers from the Liberals' commitment to moving forward with privatization and P3s.

The member from Toronto-Danforth raised some really legitimate and important concerns about the implications of outsourcing motor vehicle inspection. The Auditor General had noted earlier that the ministry does not practise adequate oversight of the process of commercial vehicle inspection, and now they're talking about transferring this responsibility to a private sector operator, which will only reduce accountability and transparency for the citizens of this province.

We also know from the experience of Serco, who operate the driver's licensing system, that there are huge safety risks that are associated. Serco was not testing tractor-trailer drivers on highways. As a result, there were unregulated licence mills that were springing up, with truck drivers offered licences with no ministry oversight. This is a risk that we cannot afford to take.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, monsieur le Président. It's a great pleasure to talk to you today about Bill 31. Obviously we're engaged with the process of supporting this bill, and I fully do support this bill. I would like to focus on some of the intended outcomes of the bill, such as impaired driving; distracted driving; medically unfit drivers; truck, vehicle and bus safety; pedestrian safety and cyclist safety.

We do have some persistent challenges in Ontario that this bill addresses. Some 45% of drivers who have been killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. These statistics are dreadful. Drinking-and-driving fatalities account for nearly one quarter of all road fatalities in 2011. From

2008 to 2012, 14% of convicted alcohol-impaired drivers were repeat offenders.

1500

Furthermore, on the issue of distracted driving: Everybody is busy these days. Nobody takes the time to just be responsible in a vehicle and focus on one thing, and that is driving. When we're behind the wheel, we're behind roughly 2,000 to 2,500 pounds of steel. That makes a big difference when you're distracted. We have to do better than we are doing now. Legislated fines are increasing from \$60 to \$500, which will be a necessary deterrent.

We cannot afford to leave safety to chance. I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments, I believe. We now return to the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members for St. Catharines, Sarnia—Lambton, London West, and Kingston and the Islands for their comments.

Of course, I must go to the member for St. Catharines first, because I think he's right: He saw the smoke coming out of the building when the Conservative shredders were trying to destroy all the records. And the Liberals did take a lesson from that. They went to computers so that they could delete without actually having to physically set fire to records anymore.

I understand the efficiency of that, Speaker. I actually had the opportunity in the justice committee to question Liberal staffers who assured me that on a regular basis they destroyed all the records they had in their possession. I would say that the Liberals have taken a step beyond the Conservatives. They don't mess around like those guys did. They don't wait a few years to shred or destroy. They do it on the spot, as they go along. I recognize the innovation that is noted there.

The member for Sarnia—Lambton talked about unpaid fines and the impact that has on municipalities. I think this bill does address that, in part, and that is actually an advantage. Cities and municipalities need money to actually deliver the services we all depend on. That's a step forward.

I appreciate the comments from my colleague the member for London West. It does not appear that the Liberals have learned from the mistakes and the costs of privatization. The Auditor General noted the \$8-billion extra cost tied to infrastructure projects that were set up with a P3—public-private partnership—structure. Eight billion dollars is hard to ignore. This is a province that is dealing with very large negative numbers in its budgets, and yet has not set aside that approach in this bill, is not taking advantage of the opportunity to stop deepening privatization. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and add to the debate on Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act or, in short form, Making Ontario's Roads Safer, 2015.

As I begin my remarks, I would like to share a surprising statistic for those of you who are watching at home and even for those who are watching right here in this Legislature. Distracted driving has now passed both speeding and impaired driving as the leading cause of death on provincial highways. I don't want to just take away from distracted driving for a moment, but I might add that there's a certain leader of the Liberal Party at the federal level who is talking about legalizing marijuana. That's only going to perhaps increase impaired driving on our highways, but you see, he's actually working for his Liberal cousins: With the increased fines, he's helping them do something about this tremendous debt they have us in right now.

Back on the element of distracted driving, penalties for using handheld devices while behind the wheel will be raised from between \$300 and \$1,000 from the current fine range of \$60 to \$500. We welcome these changes. Distracted drivers put countless others at risk every day in communities across our province, and more must be done to tackle this issue.

However, many critics are left wondering why, after numerous indications that upcoming legislation would introduce demerit points, there's no mention whatsoever of demerit points in this particular bill. "Let's up the fine, but oh, don't worry about the demerit points." Instead, the minister can bring in—yes, here we go—regulations to perhaps implement demerit points at a later date.

Our October 22 BlackburnNews in London published an article with the title "Distracted Driving Changes Not Enough." In the article, Bill 31's curious lack of distracted driving demerit points was, in fact, questioned: "As the province pushes to increase fines and add demerit points to the record of those convicted of distracted driving, local police do not think it will deter people from texting and driving.

"As of right now, there are only two provinces in the country that do not have demerit points attached to a distracted driving offence, and"—by the way, Speaker, coincidentally—"Ontario is one of them."

That's something that police forces, safety advocates and citizens are calling for. The opposition has indicated support on this as well, so let's get it done.

Bill 31 does not simply look at regulations around automobiles, either; it also looks at bicycle safety laws. Some may think that bicycle safety is only a big-city issue, but it is a concern for all cities of all sizes as well as rural towns. My riding of Chatham—Kent—Essex is, in fact, no stranger to tragic bike accidents. Leamington residents remember the summer evening Kyle Peters, only 15 years old, was struck and hit by a car. That is a parents' worst nightmare. No matter how safely a child operates their bike, one distracted driver is all it takes. As a legislator and parent, and now grandparent, I cannot stress enough the importance of wearing a helmet and installing lights on your bicycle if you plan to ride in darkened conditions.

Bill 31 would see the repeal of a \$20 fine for failing to have lights on before dawn or dusk. I would suggest,

then, that anyone watching or listening today take that \$20 and go out and purchase a set of lights for your bike. Your safety is paramount. You can save your life with less than \$20. I think everyone can agree that that's a great investment.

With more and more distractions at the hands of drivers, you can never know if the car that is coming up behind you is aware that you are there. Please, make yourself as noticeable as possible and practise caution. My wife and I go out at night and we bike, and we make sure our lights are in working condition and they're on for our own safety as well as letting oncoming traffic know we're around.

Speaker, I'd like to highlight an area of the bill that I feel my constituents would be interested in. If Bill 31 is passed, it would require all drivers to move into another lane when approaching stopped emergency vehicles and tow trucks with flashing lights. Each week, I drive between Chatham and Toronto along the 401 and I pass countless emergency vehicles and tow trucks. I've seen far too many close calls where drivers pass these cars at a high rate of speed only a few feet away. I would like to commend my colleague the member for Simcoe North who brought this issue to the government's attention with his "slow down, move over" private member's bill. Good ideas are non-partisan. It's a welcome sign that this government is listening to some of the good ideas that the opposition has been suggesting, and I hope that they continue to listen.

Both pedestrians and drivers will be responsible for safety at crosswalks. Pedestrians must not enter a crosswalk if a car does not have time to stop, making both the driver and pedestrian lawfully responsible for the safety of pedestrians. I don't know how many times I've seen pedestrian crosswalk lights flashing as someone is about to cross, and I see an oncoming vehicle and it appears to me that they're not going to stop and I honk my horn and point up at those lights. This has happened several times, where I've tried to bring it to the attention of the oncoming drivers. But if you get hit by a car, it would be a small consolation that you may or may not have had the right of way. So, pedestrians, be careful out there.

New subsection 7(12.0.1) of the act provides that if a pedestrian is in default of a payment of a fine imposed for a traffic or parking offence, no permit held by that person shall be validated and no permit shall be issued to that person until that fine is paid. What this means is that municipalities would be given the power to withhold licence renewal until unpaid fines are paid. For too long municipalities have been forced to wait for these powers to be granted by the province while watching millions and millions of fines go uncollected.

So if you get a speeding ticket, the province is able to deny your licence plate renewal if you do not pay the fine. This has been the case for many years. It only seems fair to grant a similar ability to municipalities, especially since they've been calling for this for some time.

1510

The municipality of Chatham-Kent in my riding has been facing a multi-million dollar infrastructure deficit for years now. Roads and bridges that desperately need maintenance are left alone because there's simply not enough funding in the municipality. Increased fine collection revenue will help, but on its own it will not be enough to tackle the growing infrastructure deficit.

Even with a slight tax increase in their new budget, council is unable to keep up with our community's infrastructure repair costs. Our tax base has been absolutely devastated during the reign of this Liberal government, as we've lost over 10,000 jobs in the last decade. Manufacturing is almost a thing of the past in the tremendous riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex.

You can have all the safety regulation in the world, but if the roads themselves are unsafe, the drivers of this province will, in fact, be put in danger. Cyclists and pedestrians will, in fact, be put in danger as well.

For Ontario's roads to be truly safe, much more must be done. Perhaps this government could consider allowing rural municipalities to use proceeds from the gas tax to fix their aging roads and bridges. That's right: all municipalities.

Interjection: John Yakabuski raised that.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: That's right. Our tremendous representative from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke had a bill that he brought forward saying that all municipalities should have a right to that gas tax.

Again, government should, perhaps, consider allowing rural municipalities to use proceeds from the gas tax to fix their aging roads and bridges, but right now, municipalities can only spend gas tax on public transit.

I know that in that great municipality within Chatham-Kent-Essex, in Leamington, they do not have public transit, and people are suffering. The roads in that area, the bridges in that area are suffering as well, but they don't get any money from this government because they don't have a public transit system. What good does that do for a Highgate resident, as an example, who can only get to and from work by car and is forced to use the roads that they need?

I'm a little bit frustrated with the fact that this government has done what they have done. I'll give you an example. Last November, a stretch of the QEW in Oakville and Mississauga wasn't plowed or salted, even ahead of rush hour. It put thousands of drivers in jeopardy. Snowplows got onto the road an hour late. They didn't even have enough trucks spreading salt; they didn't use enough salt to maintain the safety of an incredibly busy stretch of highway.

You know what, Speaker? We all have the shared responsibility of keeping our roads safe. With that, I will close for now, but I will be back in my two-minute wrap-up, soon to follow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to comment on this bill because the member left off talking about road conditions. Mississauga and—what was the stretch?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Oakville.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Oakville.

We're kind of spoiled in the city. We expect our roads to be clear and the conditions to be the best they can be so that we don't have issues with driving in the winter-time, but we seem to forget our northern partners and how important travel is to northerners. In the city, we can perhaps get on a bus or take a cab. Imagine if you had to get a cab up north to go somewhere and it was miles and miles away—how costly that would be. Maybe the cab couldn't even get on the road because the conditions of the road weren't sufficient.

We always have to keep that in mind. When we talk about road safety, we have to think about people in the north.

I also want to chat about this part of the bill, how there are some extensions into the consciousness of safety in it. One of the things that I'm glad to see in the bill is that they're going to incorporate tow trucks as one of the vehicles that you have to slow down for. When there's an emergency vehicle on the side of the road, we all know that we can't use that passing lane because there's a chance of another accident happening. They're going to incorporate tow trucks into that. That's good.

One of the things that it's kind of surprising in today's day and age that we have to write into legislation—but it's obviously necessary—is the towing of skateboarders and rollerbladers behind vehicles. That's an extremely dangerous practice among youth. We have to make sure that, if somebody is doing that, they realize that it's not just a warning anymore; there are going to be fines attached to it. It's definitely something that we need to address. It's a stunt, it's a prank, but in the end it can be a life-threatening situation, so it's good to see that in there as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's important to be a part of this discussion, because the one thing that we have to remind ourselves of is that there are four bills that are private members' bills that are incorporated in this legislation. I know the member from Parkdale-High Park had her bill about the one-metre rule, which makes a lot of sense.

Then there's the paved-shoulder bill by the member from Muskoka, another opposition bill. Until we started bringing up that bill by the member from Muskoka—to this day, it's illegal to ride your bike on the shoulder of a highway. This bill deals with paving the shoulders in rural Ontario as we retrofit and rebuild our roads. It makes a lot of sense for safety, not only for the person on the bicycle or vehicle on the paved shoulder, but also for the motorists around these highways.

Then we have the bill from the member from Simcoe, Garfield Dunlop, about moving over for tow truck drivers, which is very, very important in terms of road safety.

Those are three bills from the opposition that are in this bill, incorporated because they're good ideas.

Then there's the member from Scarborough-Rouge River. Bas Balkissoon has a bill here about impaired driving and distracted driving.

There are four good ideas from individual MPPs that are in this bill—which is a critical thing, to get the best ideas, because no one has all the answers to road safety.

Road safety and highway safety really come from a local perspective, whether you're in a city, small town or a rural area, whether you're in the north or in southwestern Ontario. We have to get the best ideas, and there are a lot of good ideas here in this bill that need to be passed to protect our citizens as they go about their daily work, going to school, going to work and going shopping. It's a good bill. Let's get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to bring comments on the thoughts my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex brings to the table. I'd like to start off by complimenting him on taking some health and safety initiative. He's lost over 30 pounds coming back between the Christmas break and now. He's half the guy he used to be, but still always there for his constituents.

Mr. Robert Bailey: What are you going to say about me?

Mr. Bill Walker: We'll go there later, Mr. Bailey.

He always brings a lot of thought, particularly to health and safety, and particularly about our highways. He introduced a PMB in the last session in regard to automatic arms and school bus safety, so I think he's always focused on the safety of his residents in Chatham-Kent-Essex. I think they're lucky to have him as their member here.

He brought up a couple of very good points. I'm going to talk about them later on today, as well, but I'll just touch on them now. One was in regard to distracted driving. I think that's something we all have to be mindful of, especially now that there are more and more things that can distract us—cellphones and those types of things—in people's cars. I'm pleased to see that they're actually paying attention to it.

What I find a little baffling is that there was a lot of talk from the minister before it was introduced about demerit points and that punitive side of things, but I don't see anything in the details. That's something that always worries me with this government, when they put something in without details, because usually we have to retract and change things back, and that's not efficient, nor good for the people who we're trying to serve. I'm a little remiss that they did do that.

He talked a little bit about the fines for municipalities that we can collect from those people who have had infractions and haven't paid. That would certainly help some of those municipalities with their ability to provide services.

He talked about infrastructure and the gas tax. Our colleague John Yakabuski has introduced at least six

times in this House a bill to be able to have all municipalities share in that gas tax, which would, again, help with the safety of things like our bridges and roads, which would overall increase the safety of all people on all roads, as opposed to current legislation which only gives those to urban places with public transportation.

1520

I'd like to commend the honourable member and my colleague, the half of him that's still here, for all that he does in this House. I look forward to watching how he continues to perform in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As my colleague just did, I rise to comment on the remarks made by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. He was quite right in his remarks. Distracted driving is deadly. It's a problem that does have to be dealt with.

This legislation takes one step further in doing that. It's my hope that this part of the legislation actually does get through in committee, that it is enforced. Unfortunately, unlike parts of this bill where enforcement of regulation is going to be watered down and undermined by allowing motor vehicle inspection centres to effectively regulate themselves, or it looks like that's what the door is being opened to—if we're going to have regulation that's effective, we can't have regulation that's far away from public hands.

I had an opportunity in the past to talk about the TSSA. People remember the explosion at Sunrise Propane here in Toronto. A few years before that, there was an explosion of a propane centre east along the 401, I think near Bowmanville, that had propane tanks raining down on the 401. Luckily no one was hurt. After Sunrise, when the bill was brought back for amendment, I asked: "How many times do we have to have propane fuelling centres blow up before control over this regulation is brought back into the hands of the government? Why is it being allowed to reside in private hands?" Well, I guess we'll have to have another explosion before we have an answer to that.

In this bill, we have the opportunity to assert public control over motor vehicle inspection and over driver testing. It would be a mistake to lose that opportunity. I hope it's not lost at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex has the floor.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I'd like to thank my colleagues the member from London–Fanshawe, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the outstanding member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and, of course, my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. Thank you for your comments.

As my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has indicated, I may only be half the man I used to be, but I pack twice the punch.

There are a number of comments and things that we could, in fact, say with regard to this particular bill, but I

wanted to touch on something that I was speaking on during my 10-minute speech, and that was that, last November—I talked earlier about the QEW in Oakville and Mississauga, which wasn't plowed or salted ahead of the evening rush hour. Of course, that put thousands of drivers at risk and put them in jeopardy. Snowplows eventually got on the road an hour late, and they just didn't have enough trucks spreading salt. I mentioned that earlier. Of course, they didn't use enough salt to maintain the safety of this incredibly busy stretch of highway. I guess the point I'd like to make on that is that if this government is, in fact, willing to hike the fines paid by Ontarians who fail to drive safely and make the roads more dangerous for drivers, will the government consider any punishment for the Minister of Transportation, whose ultimate failure to get the roads clear and ice-free perhaps led to dangerous driving conditions for thousands of drivers? With this recent case in Oakville and Mississauga, the MTO was quick to pass the blame to contractors, but at the end of the day the ministry is, in fact, accountable to the people of this province.

Again, we all have a shared responsibility to keep our roads safe. Drivers, pedestrians and cyclists all must share the road and pay attention to keep themselves and their fellow Ontarians safe. Safety must always be paramount. For that reason, I will be supporting Bill 31 at second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about this bill. I think we've all said pretty clearly on the opposition benches that we're generally supportive of this bill, with some major concerns. I just want to hearken back to my friend from Toronto–Danforth, who talks about the race to privatization and to P3s generally. We've seen, because of the Auditor General's report, the danger in that, the \$8.2 billion worth of danger in that.

Actually, just a week ago, there was a huge demonstration out in the front from our brothers and sisters in OPSEU about just where you end up when you begin to privatize. It hasn't worked. It doesn't work. It won't work, and Highway 407 is a perfect example of why it doesn't work. That money could be flowing into our coffers.

I also heard from the member from London West about the concerns over the delays and the time it takes to get your licence reinstated. This is something all of our constituency offices face. We've all had those calls. People need their cars in order to work. They need their cars for mobility. Cars are not a luxury for many people; they need them. So four to six weeks without one is a problem, and that has to be addressed.

I also, as the urban transportation critic, have asked the Minister of Transportation for a very simple set of facts. I asked back in the summer—I first met him back in June. I asked, for MoveOntario 2020, when are the projects rolling out? How much will the projects cost? Where will the projects be? I have yet to receive an answer. I think that's a problem. MoveOntario 2020 was

decided under the era of Dalton McGuinty here, and we still don't have facts about the rollout of the projects. We need those facts. I need those facts, as an urban transit critic, and I think Ontarians need those facts. They need to know where all that money is going—where it's coming from and what it's going on. So that's important too.

I, of course, am thrilled, and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence mentioned this, that the one-metre rule is finally in place in this bill. I have to say it goes to the Premier, who was then transportation minister, who at the time that that bill was tabled said, "It wasn't well thought out." It's nice to know that she has changed her mind and that she admits she made a mistake, that in fact not only was a bill well thought out, but it's now incorporated into the government bill. So that's good.

The problems, of course, are in the details. But before I get to that, I want to start with the big picture, because I am the urban transit critic for the New Democratic Party, and I want to talk about what a city would look like with safe roads. We have examples. We're not speaking about utopia here. If you go to Scandinavia, if you go to most European capitals, you will find something you won't find in Toronto. You will find designated cycle paths. I know my friend from Burlington, who used to be with Share the Road, and Cycle TO have called for designated cycle paths. Now, we're not talking about lines on the street. The number one reason people do not bike in Toronto is because they don't feel safe, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they're not safe. They are not safe; hence the one-metre rule. There's a little bit of wiggle language around that, which I'll get into in a minute, which I'd like to change and which needs to be amended. But a healthy city, a safe city for transportation, is a city where people can cycle safely. That's number one.

Number two: It's a city that has a transportation system that is well funded. We have the worst-funded transportation system, talking about other levels of government, in all of North America. We used to pay 50% of the operating costs of the Toronto Transit Commission right here in the provincial government. That's back in the days when the NDP was in government. Then, of course, the Conservatives came in, and the Liberals continued the tradition of downloading the costs of running the transportation system.

We can see the result of that. The result is people waiting for the bus in minus-23-degree temperatures. We see people who can't afford to get on the bus because the fares are high. We see the problems, the problems of not putting money into infrastructure in Toronto for a long, long time. Two levels of government are guilty of that: this one under the Liberals and, of course, Ottawa under the Conservatives—both levels of government. We need a national transit strategy and, my goodness, we seem to need a provincial one too, because we haven't seen that strategy rolled out.

1530

A healthy, safe city, where transportation is concerned, is a city with transportation where you don't need

to take your car. You don't need to take your car to drive around Toronto.

I know TTCriders—I want to give them a shout-out—and all of those good people, and the Ontario Clean Train Coalition, all of those folk who are working—because that's the other thing that this government is doing: They're going to be running a Union Pearson Express that's going to be diesel. Only Bangladesh is buying diesel equipment. That's the only city in the world, outside of us, that is investing in diesel right now. It will be running past my constituents' backyards, the member from York South—Weston's backyards, the member from Trinity—Spadina's backyards, and others, and schools, polluting the air, and will not provide transportation. Here's a multi-million dollar operation that could provide transportation if it was electrified, if it had multiple stops and if it tied in to the Toronto transit system, coming from Union all the way up to Pearson. That could be transportation. It won't be transportation. Again, we have a safety problem. We have a safety problem, and the safety problem is also environmental safety, which hasn't been mentioned, I think, too often. Environmental safety means keeping cars off the road when you can and where you can.

I've only got a few minutes. Into the nitty-gritty: Although I was happy to see the one-metre rule—my bill; our bill—finally put into action here, sadly, the language they use is "as may be practicable" instead of the language used elsewhere in the act: "unless the driver first ascertains that it can be done safely." Why not use clear language?

Here's a bill that fines a cyclist \$500 if they don't have a light, but \$500 is what the fine is if you kill a pedestrian. Where is the justice and the logic there? It's \$500 for not having a light on your bike, which I agree you need—no doubt—but \$500 for a fine for killing a pedestrian in a car? Something is wrong there. Clearly, amendments are needed.

Privatization: We need amendments. This is a privatizing bill. We need to change that. We need to change the language.

Another thing we need to do—this killed a cyclist who taught at Swansea Public School, and I will dedicate this to that memory—and which MP Olivia Chow brought in, is to mandate truck side guards. This was Olivia's federal bill—could have been done here; needs to be done here. This is the one opportunity when it could be done—yet another amendment that needs to happen.

Just to conclude—my goodness, 10 minutes goes fast—shout-outs to Cycle Toronto, shout-outs to Share the Road, shout-outs to TTCriders, shout-outs to the Ontario Clean Train Coalition; shout-outs to all of those people who try to make our roads safer.

Yes, while we will support this bill, my goodness, it needs amendments. It needs amendments in the language, it needs amendments in the fines structure, and it needs huge amendments, as the member from Toronto—Danforth pointed out, to the drastic privatization. This is kind of Drive Clean on steroids; that's what this bill is.

For anybody who has heard about the Drive Clean mess-up, you'll know that this isn't going to correct it.

Do we really want more 407s in our future? No, we don't, so we need to amend that part of this bill too.

Of course we need and want safer driving conditions, and higher fines for those who text or drink or drug while driving. That's important. Demerit points: important.

That's what this Legislature is for. Let's please, around this Legislature, come together to put forward amendments, treat them seriously, take them seriously, to pass them. Then we'll have a really good piece of legislation. That's what I think we should all be aiming for, and that's what I know, in the New Democratic Party, we're hoping for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's now time for questions and comments. I recognize the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. I almost said, "Thank you, Coach," but the team hasn't played a game yet. We have to resolve that.

It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague and friend from Parkdale—High Park as she spoke on Bill 31, an act to keep Ontario's roads safe.

Now, I have paid attention to the debate, not merely today but on previous occasions when we've been talking about it. More than half of the members here have already spoken to the bill in one form another, be it in debate or in questions and comments, which is their privilege. But there seem to be a couple of recurring themes here. The members are all saying the same thing. As well, I've stopped really hearing anything new, and I also gather that everybody is going to support the bill. If everybody is going to support it, and we're more or less saying the same thing, rather eloquently summed up by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, why don't we get this bill to committee where we can actually make the changes that the members have been asking about?

We've all agreed that perhaps some tweaking and some testing by bringing it out and having people come in and talk to us about the bill would help. I happen to agree with that. I think the place where we should now take this bill for further consideration isn't in the Legislature, where we're going to continue to hear versions of much the same thing—we're well into the law of diminishing returns—but let's get it to committee, where people can come in and give us some serious proposals on it, and where we can perhaps make any amendments that may be needed.

Speaker, let's sum it all up: We all agree we're going to support it. Let's get it out of the legislative chamber. Let's get it into committee. It's time for a vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to provide a comment to my colleague from Parkdale—High Park. One of the things that really hit me is that she was talking about paved shoulders. Certainly, in an area like the Bruce Peninsula, we have a lot of cyclists and we have a lot of opportunity for tourism with those types of things. I

certainly have tried, since I've been here for my three years, to lobby that any stretch of road going in new should allow that extension so we can have that safety for our cyclists, to accommodate them and to encourage tourism in areas like Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I certainly hope this government will continue to do that.

It brings up the issue, though, that I had a private member's transportation resolution on here over a year ago that all three parties unanimously supported and this government hasn't brought anything out with it. My concern is that that would be one. The gas tax was talked about earlier—my colleague John Yakabuski raised that—and again, unanimous support and there was nothing done with that to ensure that that money would be shared across all municipalities.

I want to go back to the paved shoulders a little bit. I believe that my colleague Norm Miller, from Parry Sound—Muskoka, brought that in. It's good to see that at least that piece of his private member's bill is going to be brought into this bill so that we can actually see it happen in the future. He's going to be bringing a bill here this Thursday, I believe, Bill 58, and it's going to extend the definition of ATVs. It's good, again, that these things are being brought.

What is relevant here is that there's a small little piece of this bill that is going to remove the low-pressure tire requirement. I can't understand why any government would have put that in there in the past—why you would ever get that down into the weeds. But the good news is that that's going to be brought out. I think Norm is going to bring a really good bill. ATVs, again, are a great form of transportation. It needs to be something in areas like Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound so that people can get from one piece of property to another. They need to be able to go on the highways and allow those people to do as they need for both recreational and work purposes.

It's all about safety at the end of the day. There are lots of amendments I'd still like to make. Mr. Delaney wants us to get this to committee, but we've taken things to committee before and we couldn't even get the speakers, like Laura Miller and Peter Faist, to come to some of those committees. So we'd like to get it there and make some amendments when we have the ability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to remind members that when referencing, please do not use the member's first or last name. Please refer to them by riding.

Further comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll start off by thanking the member from Parkdale—High Park for her great work on this file. It certainly is a complex issue.

When I read the bill, I had some concerns about the lack of education. In my short tenure in Toronto for the last few years, I've had the pleasure of driving on the streets of Toronto, and I can tell you right now that the cyclists and some pedestrians—not all cyclists—are not following the rules of the road and neither are some of the drivers. I'll tell you that I've been in a car on some of the main streets in Toronto when a cyclist will go up the

middle between two rows of cars and wonder why they get hit, or they'll sit at the stoplight in front of you when they want to take off at a slow rate, causing further possible vehicle collisions. They will turn right on a red light without stopping. They will go through a red light. So the education of the cyclists—and, mind you, there are a lot of good cyclists who follow the rules, but there are a lot of bad ones, just as there are bad drivers and good drivers.

1540

But the problem in Toronto is enforcement. The police should be giving these people tickets for running red lights on bicycles, because they're going to get killed, or they're going to cause an accident. The thing—what's it called?

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Dooring. That's a bit of a joke. What if you stop to let a person out of your car in front of a store? Isn't it the responsibility of the cyclist to watch for the door, too, when they open—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: No, of course not. We're supposed to watch for them with eyes in the back of our heads when a passenger doesn't have a mirror to look out of, and the mirror is always adjusted for the driver, not for the passenger. So when the passenger opens the door, and a cyclist gets hit, maybe the cyclists are travelling too fast when they come to an intersection. Maybe they should slow down and watch for us elderly people who open these doors to get out to go to an appointment or something, or stop in a store. Maybe that would be good.

The bottom line here is it's about safety; it's about enforcement. I don't see a lot of that in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I understand we have one last question or comment. I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: Bob says he's already heard enough, and he doesn't want to hear any more.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm happy to rise to add my voice to this debate, despite the fact that there may be some who may not want to hear what I have to say.

I think we've heard a great deal on this bill. It is intended to help improve road safety. It's intended to enhance the collection of defaulted Provincial Offences Act fines. It's going to improve the Highway 407 East Act, and it's going to address outstanding housekeeping proposals.

We've also heard that, according to recent stats, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs, or a combination of drugs and alcohol, in their system—we need to be very concerned about this—and that drinking-and-driving fatalities represented nearly one quarter of all fatalities in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say this to you: I agree with the member from Mississauga—Streetsville that we seem to be extending the debate on this bill by continuing to put up speakers. So far, we have debated this for over 10 hours. We've heard from 57 members of the Legisla-

ture—they've either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. Listening to the debate, it's clear that the majority of members do support the bill, so that would signal that there really is no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill. So is the goal to delay?

I'm calling on the opposition parties to please stop stalling, and let's move forward on this very important piece of legislation so that we can use our time effectively to debate other bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that's our final question and comment. I now return to the member for Parkdale—High Park for her reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I thank all the members for their input. I want to address a concern from the Liberal benches about the process of debate. This is what this place is for; we are here to debate. Even if we agree with the substance of a bill, if we have concerns or questions, this is the Legislature where debate happens.

Are the members across the aisle seriously suggesting that if we agree with the majority of the bill that we not debate? Really. I think there's a word for that. It's called an oligarchy, or worse—come on. A bill comes before us. We're following parliamentary procedure. We're raising issues. That is what our constituents sent us here to do. That's number one.

Number two: I didn't quite get the chance to speak about some of the other issues in the bill, and I wanted to point out that one of the problems is collecting on convictions. In fact, \$36 million was outstanding in Toronto courts in 2009, which was the same as the shortfall for the Toronto Transit Commission.

On a very personal note, I want to say that there's work to be done there, particularly—I hope they're watching—the white van parked in front of my house from some state—I will not mention the state, because there are many good citizens there; this one is not one of them—in the blind spot that has been ticketed every single day. We see this on Toronto streets, Mr. Speaker. Every single day, he drives away, he comes back, he parks overnight. Come on. He knows that these tickets will never be enforced. He knows that he will not be towed for a parking ticket. These are the kinds of violations.

So another amendment at committee: Let's strengthen the ability to collect; our municipalities need that and they've asked for that. That's one of their major demands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure to debate—what the place is for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to add my voice on behalf of my constituents in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

There are a number of things in this bill that I do like, actually, and I'm going to talk about a few of those, but there are some I also have some challenges and concerns with.

To my colleague from High Park who just spoke, this is the place we're supposed to bring our debate. This is where we're supposed to bring our thoughts and interests

from our residents and our constituents whom we have the privilege of representing. I find it interesting that when it's convenient, they don't want to have any discussion in here. They wanted to have something like the transparency and accountability act time-allocated and yet here they just want to rush through and get everything out of debate again. We're going to talk about a few of those.

The first one that I find very interesting is distracted driving. I do agree that it's becoming more and more of a concern. There are stats out there that show—I believe the Ontario Provincial Police cite distracted driving as a causal factor in 30% to 50% of traffic collisions in Ontario. So it is something that we need to all be aware of. We need to be finding ways that we can limit that. In this case, what they're suggesting is that distracted drivers on cellphones will face maximum fines of \$1,000 and three demerit points. I certainly support the fines. It is something where people are endangering other people's lives as well as their own. They're putting people on our highways at risk, so there have to be some teeth to the law.

I want to recognize my colleague and former MPP John O'Toole for actually pioneering distracted driving legislation over 10 years ago. Johnny was always ahead of the curve, and in this case he was yet again. He brought in his private member's bill to talk about distracted driving back then. It's sad that it has taken 10 years for it to finally be implemented, but this seems to be the way with a lot of things with this government. If it's not related to spending and going into debt or deficit, they really don't speed things along. He was certainly the first to recognize that using a cellphone while driving had become a common practice and it needed to stop.

The concern I have with the bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it talks about demerit points in here, but there's nothing really in the legislation in a detailed manner that suggests what's going to happen or what the penalty for those will be, and they talk about doing that through regulation. It just worries me, with this government, when they won't bring things in this House for all of us, all 107 democratically elected people, to have those discussions, that they want to hide it back in regulation, which means they really have a blank cheque. I think my colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga, the critic for transportation for our PC caucus, said in his opening remarks that he's concerned about the devil in the details. We don't always see those, and we know what has happened in certain cases when that's happened before. Then we spend onerous amounts of time, energy and resources to actually try to fight after they've enacted it into law.

The Green Energy Act would be one of those things that they steamrolled across the province. They placed them in places where nobody really wants them and now we're fighting tooth and nail to try to restrict them and to claw back, which is very challenging.

I would like to see more detail. Certainly I would like to understand what that demerit point is. Everyone, I think, has concluded that demerits are a good way for people to be cognizant; there is a concern there are teeth

to the law and we need to look at that a little bit more closely to ensure that there are going to be demerit points included in this and what that detail is.

Another piece of the legislation that I find positive is emergency vehicles and tow trucks. All drivers must slow down and move over when approaching a stopped emergency vehicle with flashing lights. Earlier this afternoon, I talked about rural Ontario, where we have volunteer fire department personnel that actually have a green flashing light in their window. Again, we want to ensure that that is the case. Garfield Dunlop brought up his private member's bill to try to help with that as well. We certainly support enshrining the safety precautions of this piece of the legislation.

One thing that has come up in my riding, though, and I brought it to this House before, is that snowplow operators, in a case where there are closed roads, aren't covered by insurance, and in fact, they can't go on those travelled roads. So it's a little flaw in the legislation there. How do they get out to plow the roads to make them passable and safe for others if there's legislation that prevents that from happening? I think that's one that we want to ensure we can actually bring to fruition again. It could have perhaps been included in this bill, had the minister listened to my concerns seriously, so these snowplow operators won't be forced to break the law by driving on closed roads to get to their plows during a storm and then get home again afterwards. They are the first people out. I'm going to continue to push the minister to take a look at that. Perhaps that can be something I can at least get through at the committee level to enhance and improve that piece of legislation. It is something I hope the minister will look at.

1550

Municipal powers: Right after I got elected, I had one of my constituencies, one of the regional governments in my area, county government, call me and ask about unpaid fines. In 2011, over \$1 million—I believe my colleague from Sarnia, Bob Bailey, said that in his riding there is about \$1 million in unpaid fines. I trust that's the way across the province. A lot of us have the ability to collect those fines, which could be put into things like roads, bridges, any municipal infrastructure we all need more money for. This legislation should hopefully be able to help that.

It looks like what they're going to do is finally listen. Again, this was from at least as far back as 2011. About one third of these unpaid fines in municipalities are related to the Highway Traffic Act, according to a study published by the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. It would be a good way to allow municipalities to recover that. I think what they're suggesting is that you will not be able to renew, for example, your driver's licence sticker if you have unpaid fines left there.

There's a lot of time and energy spent on these things. You would think, with today's technology, that that would be something pretty easy to record and very simple to implement; and if you don't pay your unpaid fine, you don't get your driver's licence. That would be

something that certainly makes sense and is a realistic way to move forward.

Medical reports: In this case, what they're suggesting is that it will require more medical professionals to report a driver's health condition to the province. The concern I have here is the impact on people in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and, of course, those across the province, where the car is the only means of transportation, especially if the condition is misdiagnosed or information is miscommunicated. Losing your licence in a place like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is the most punitive measure, because that is your ability to get to jobs, to get your family to medical appointments, to get yourself to those types of medical appointments.

The concern that we have, particularly in the case where it's been misdiagnosed or there's misinformation, is going through all that rigmarole to try to get that licence back, and the cost, the lost wages, the impact to that family—not just the driver being impacted, but the family—and their ability to provide income for their family.

I said here briefly a little bit earlier, in one of my feedback sessions, that about a year and a half ago, I introduced a private member's resolution for public transportation for rural and northern Ontario. Many of our areas do not have public transportation. That private member's resolution was passed unanimously in this House in November 2013, yet I've never heard anything from the government in power, the Liberal government, actually talking to me about how we move forward with that, how we enact it, how we at least have a discussion about it to try to find ways that would help the transportation concerns and needs of those in a rural area or in northern Ontario. Certainly, it's something that I'm concerned about.

The anti-poverty task force came out very strongly in support of my resolution because they saw the detrimental impact not having public transportation can have in an area like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—people not being able to get to work, not being able to get to volunteer opportunities, not being able to get to medical appointments. I think there are some areas there that we need to look at. We just need to make sure we're not creating bureaucracies of administration that will unduly—or even unacknowledged situations where people will be deprived of that transportation ability.

Unintended consequence I guess is what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes they put these punitive types of things in that are not really designed for the person who has been misdiagnosed. It's an awful battle. I know my constituency staff do a wonderful job working with constituents to try to move through when that type of thing happens, but it's a long, arduous process, and those people are going without jobs, without that ability to get there the whole time.

The vehicle inspection centres: Some are already calling this Drive Clean 2, the sequel. They're introducing a new mandatory inspection and fee program. The concern is that this could just be a government that's in trouble financially trying to find yet another revenue tool,

as they like to call it—rather than a tax, which is what it is—to actually help them find ways to fund the things they've made so many promises for.

I heard one of the more senior members in the House today saying, “Spend, spend, spend.” I'm not certain if he was paying attention to the debate or whether it just naturally comes out, but it is sadly something that is almost part of their DNA on that side of the House: spend, spend, spend. We'd just like them to actually live within their means, to spend what they have, not put us in double the debt like they have in their 10 years, not to double the deficit and spend all of that money servicing the debt payment. The \$12 billion a year right now that this government spends on interest payments alone could be going to the front lines and could be going to help transportation safety, Mr. Speaker—to ensure that I stay on topic. I want to make sure I do that so I never get on your wrong side, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that that is the case. It is concerning that they're going to have these illegal taxes on a system like that.

Overall, I think that health and safety, obviously, is something I stand up and speak proudly about in this House every day. I think there are some good pieces of this bill. I do believe that there are other pieces in here that we need to look at. Certainly, that demerit point, as I mentioned before, is one of those that I want to take a secondary look at. I want to ensure we have true teeth so that people can do it.

Those unpaid fines—I think it's great to see that we can finally help our municipalities collect those revenues that they so rightly deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have to give credit to my colleague the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He's able to squeeze in a lot of content in all his speeches. He has a gift for words where he can say so much in a short period of time. I have to commend him on that. Thank you so much. I listened—

Interjection: He's a talker.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: He's a talker, eh, the Walker?

Interjection: He's an auctioneer.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Is he really? That makes so much sense. Wow.

One of the points he talked about is that there are certain things that are great with this bill and certain things that we have to take credit for as members of the New Democratic Party. We're proud that some of those things are included in this bill. They're certainly great additions.

But there are certain problems. The member talked about the vehicle inspection centre being a potential problem, and I wholeheartedly agree. I want to spend some time talking about it. We know the direction this government is taking when it comes to various areas of outsourcing services that should be done by the province but they're outsourced to a separate entity. One of the primary problems that comes up when you outsource is the lack of accountability. We've seen that with respect

to Serco and the privatized driver licensing system. There have been colossal problems with that system. It's an unaccountable system and there are certainly problems. We know that that exists, so why would we then commence down a path to create more problems? These vehicle inspection centres are another example of a potential whole other suite of problems because there is no accountability.

We know another very clear example where we have a lack of accountability and a lack of transparency, which is certainly damaging people in Ontario, and that's Taronis. Taronis is an arm's-length entity that is absolutely not providing the care, not providing the protection and the service that Ontarians require and deserve. In fact, Taronis is working against home owners time and time again. We need to improve from our mistakes instead of repeating them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to add my two cents' worth to this bill. I wish to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his comments and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for comments toward this bill.

The opposition parties are needlessly extending the debate on Bill 31 by continuing to put forward speakers. This bill has been debated for over 11 hours. Over 60 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in debate during questions and comments. Listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members support this bill. If you support this bill—you've been in this House for a number of years longer than I have—you know that to make changes to this bill, that's done in committee; that's not done in the House. So it's not really a productive use of time in this House to prolong debate on this bill when there are a number of other bills of similar importance that are waiting in the docket to move forward.

Listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members in this House support this bill. The signals are there. There is no true desire to have any further meaningful debate on this bill. Their only goal is to delay this bill.

1600

Let's move forward and move this bill to committee where the real work will begin to make amendments to this bill. I'm sure we're open to amendments, but that's where the amendments will take place. I am calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us move this bill forward, so that once again we can move forward on important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure today to address and share some comments on my neighbour and friend's review of this particular bill.

It was interesting, Speaker, that just a few seconds ago we heard from the government side of the House that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did not bring

anything new to this debate. I beg to differ. Because you know what? We all have different perspectives. From an emergency operator perspective, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound very astutely recognized that, right now, it's against the law for snowplow operators to get to their snowplows. This is something that is absolutely relevant in rural Ontario, which perhaps the other side of the House never gets. The fact of the matter is that just last week again, roads were closed. We need people out there, and to respect what it really takes to get those emergency vehicles going and make sure the roads are open in a safe format.

Another thing the member raised was that he brought forward a resolution in 2013 to try to find ways to address transportation issues in rural Ontario. In terms of poverty reduction, it's a huge issue. People move out to small-town Ontario, and they don't have the infrastructure. They don't have the supports in place. So there are many different aspects that we need to be considering when we're talking about not only safe roads but safe transportation in Ontario.

When we talk specifically about safe roads, again, it's interesting. This particular bill shows what this Liberal government is all about. It always comes back to lack of context and content. The fact of the matter is that the details are always riddled with devilish little ways to prop up their own agendas. I appreciate the comments and the member's bringing our attention to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He did touch on a number of issues that, quite honestly, I found to be very salient to this debate. I have no sympathy, though, for the members opposite complaining about this debate. I'm sorry that this democracy is so inconvenient for you, but this is an important part of the process.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound touched on the distracted driving piece, which does need to be strengthened. I will say that I commend the government for bringing it and containing it within the legislation, but there are serious ways we can actually address distracted driving.

Based on the stats, because policies should be informed by data—if you want to serve the people best, then you should actually have good data and good information. Quite honestly, the data on distracted driving, which I don't think the member got a chance to talk about—distracted driving charges are up 30% in my area of Waterloo region. Motor vehicle collisions because of distracted driving are up 11%. Our local police chief, Bryan Larkin, says that officers are still encountering a large number of drivers who are still using smartphones and other mobile devices while behind the wheel.

There have been education campaigns which, in some respects, have been successful, as the member mentioned. But you need proper oversight, and you need officers on the ground. People need to understand how serious the issue of distracted driving is. As we commute,

a lot of us spend a lot of time in cars. You can see people who consider their cars to be their offices because they're stuck in their cars for so long because we have such terrible gridlock in the province of Ontario. So we're looking forward to actually addressing the safety component of this legislation when it does get to committee, but I'm looking forward to the debate here in the House this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments this round, and I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I'll try to get in as many words as I can here in my auctioneer chant, just for him. He brought up vehicle inspection centres and accountability, and I think it's a prime example after we spent the morning in this House talking about accountability in regard to the Sudbury by-election and a Premier who continues to stand beside people who have alleged convictions coming toward them. Accountability is a big piece of this bill, and one of the key tenets that we see with this Liberal government is their lack of accountability.

The member from Durham made the comment in here that we need to just pass this and get it to committee, where the real work gets done. Well, again, I'd like to ask that member why he's not in favour of bringing Laura Miller and Peter Faist back in front of a real committee to get real work done, so that we can get the real truth about such an issue.

My colleague, neighbour and friend from Huron–Bruce brought up a very important matter that, again, I have raised in this House, that being the emergency operator situation that we find our snowplow operators in. There's legislation that actually forces them to break the law by driving on closed roads, even though their job is to get out to get those roads open. I brought it to the attention of the minister, it was a unanimous resolution supported in this House by all three parties, and yet there's not one word of it in this transportation safety act upgrade. I'm disappointed to see that that wasn't in there.

The other one in there is my private member's resolution about transportation for rural and northern Ontario, which again is something that was passed by all members of this Legislature and agreed with, and yet not a word was breathed of it in this legislation—a little concerning.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo—I think she brought up a very poignant comment there, on the inconvenient democracy of the ability to debate in this chamber. This is what we are elected to do. This is what our government, and our government's structure, is formed on. I find it disingenuous that members on that side don't want to allow people to have debate in this House. That's what we're sent here to do. If we do a good debate, we have good legislation which serves the people of Ontario, and that's what we're intended to do.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I heard “disingenuous.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I have to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay. Further debate? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker—

Hon. James J. Bradley: He'll have a good speech.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Minister.

Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014, is unfortunately another omnibus bill. It is an amalgamation of two bills introduced in the previous Parliament, as well as some additional measures. Regardless of whether I support the substance of the bill or not, I am dismayed by the continuing use of omnibus bills by this government. In this, as in too many matters, they seem to be taking cues from the government in Ottawa. Omnibus bills are nothing but a means to minimize the scrutiny that my colleagues and I provide to this House.

Having said that, I would like to talk positively and constructively about Bill 31. New Democrats are supportive of the bill and its objective to make Ontario roads safer. Of course, we do have reservations about certain aspects of the projected legislation, but on the whole it is a positive and welcome development from this government. By the way, I would also like to make it clear that nobody has offered me a job for not opposing this bill.

I don't have time to talk comprehensively about the legislation, so I'll address just a couple of aspects of it. This bill is especially relevant in my home city of Hamilton. Unfortunately, Hamilton pedestrians and cyclists are at a higher risk of getting hit by cars than the provincial average. There were 18 traffic fatalities in Hamilton last year, so the provisions in this bill that will enhance pedestrians', cyclists' and drivers' safety are extremely important to my constituents.

Hamilton pedestrians are 42% more likely to be injured than the provincial rate. The risk to cyclists is up to 81% higher than the Ontario average. The Social Planning and Research Council found that Hamilton is second only to Windsor for the number of pedestrians who die while walking. I do not believe that Hamilton drivers are any less careful than drivers in the rest of Ontario; instead, we most likely have a problem of poor engineering and design of our roads.

Gridlock is a big part of the problem. It creates a situation where motorists spend half their commute crawling at a snail's pace and the other half driving at high speed in order to make up the time they have lost. We could have safer roads if drivers were instead able to maintain a consistent and moderate speed during their journeys. Highway speeds are not appropriate or safe where pedestrians or cyclists are right next to the traffic.

1610

Under this bill, drivers must allow a distance of one metre “as may be practicable” when overtaking a cyclist. This sensible and potentially life-saving measure has

been championed for years by my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Most significantly, this bill ramps up the fines for dooring to a minimum of \$300 up to a maximum of \$1,000. Frankly, I don't think that's enough. Being hit by a car door is one of the greatest dangers that cyclists on our streets face. However, the cyclists have to have a responsibility in how they ride their bicycles, too, and a lot of them don't. We do not have good data on this in Ontario, but in Chicago an ambulance was called in 50% of doorings, compared to 30% of other cycling accidents. Dooring is one of the most dangerous forms of collision, but it also is a most preventable type of bicycle-car collision.

This increase in the fine could save lives, we hope, but alongside greater responsibilities for drivers, cyclists on our roads need to take responsibility for their actions as well. Sometimes I and many members, I'm sure, shake our heads at the lack of awareness of certain cyclists. I've seen cyclists on their phone; I've seen them eating sandwiches; I've seen them turning right on a red light without stopping; I've seen them driving up between two lanes of traffic and parking in front of the intersection, and giving us a gesture while they're doing it. I've seen cyclists weaving through traffic right and left trying to speed past the right-hand side of a car that's making a right turn. Well, I guess you're asking for it if you do stuff like that.

We need more understanding, more accommodation and less hostility between cyclists and drivers. It's a two-way street, no pun intended. We need better education and training for cyclists as well as drivers. Last week, I saw a driver with a sandwich in one hand and a text in the other. I think the thing was on autopilot; I'm not sure. But the car certainly was weaving a bit, to say the least.

Maybe the right place for this would start in the high schools or maybe grade 8, to let people know about the responsibility of taking to the roads.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about a bad law. Right now, and this is quite bizarre, cyclists are not allowed to have a flashing red light. This will probably come as quite a surprise to more safety-conscious cyclists on our roads, many of whom are wise enough to know that a flashing red light is the best way to make themselves visible to drivers at night. This is a bad law. One small commendable provision of this bill is that it now permits cyclists to use a flashing red bicycle light. That's good.

At the same time as encouraging good, responsible cyclists, this bill will also punish irresponsible ones who bike at night without lights. A lot of them wear dark clothing and are almost impossible to see, especially in bad weather. If you are on the road at night in a car or truck or on a bicycle and you have no lights, you're putting yourself and everyone around you in danger. That's unacceptable. This bill proposes higher fines for cycling without lights—not to where I'd like to see it, but it improves it.

We also need better enforcement by our police officers. If you run a red light on a bicycle, you should pay

the same fine and lose your privilege like car drivers do after losing 15 demerit points. We should examine the whole scale of fines proposed in this bill to ensure that they correctly reflect the scale of seriousness of offences. I've said before that fines should be proportionate, fair and backed by evidence. I hope this is addressed at committee level.

In an accident involving a car versus a bike, or a car versus a pedestrian, it doesn't take a PhD to figure out who is going to come off worse almost every time. So while we need to improve the education of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike, we must pass legislation that minimizes collisions between motor vehicles and either pedestrians or cyclists.

Legislation and education will not be enough, of course. As I alluded to earlier, a legacy of poor road design and engineering will need to be addressed in order to reduce the structural reasons for these collisions. Bad crosswalk designs, a lack of good sidewalks and a failure to separate high-speed vehicles from slow bicycle traffic are just a few examples of poor design that increases the rate of accidents.

People make mistakes. We can't engineer human error away completely but we can certainly improve it. Pedestrians will walk out without checking the signal. Cyclists will turn left without looking in each direction. Drivers will try to take a right turn without checking their blind side. We can't engineer these mistakes away completely, but what we can do is engineer roads, crosswalks and intersections where the consequences of a mistake are much less serious, where human error is better understood and where if collisions do happen, they are at much lower speeds.

Here in this chamber, we only have a limited and indirect influence over these things, but we can do something else. If we can't reduce the physical consequences of collisions, we can increase the financial and legal consequences. This bill seeks to do that, and by doing so it should make our roads a little bit safer.

A good friend of mine, the vice-president of my local union, was walking out of a shopping mall into the parking lot just a couple of months ago, when he was hit by a high-speed car. He suffered serious, life-threatening injuries and a lot of broken bones. He's slowly on the mend and has just started to walk again. That's how bad it was. A distracted driver hit him in the parking lot of the mall and drove him 25 feet.

People should not be driving at high speed in a parking lot. You should not be driving in a parking lot at a speed that doesn't give you time to react. Distracted driving is a plague in this province and quite frankly becomes a plague worldwide.

We've created a society and a culture in which you always have to be available. It's the expectation you immediately pick up the phone or answer a text, and if you don't there's something wrong with you. Well, last time I looked they do have technology that's called hands-free. If you want to talk on the phone so much, either pull over or use hands-free equipment.

Once you breed the expectation into people, they respond accordingly. That beep is an annoying sound anywhere. It's almost a call to nature. Speaking of which, I've heard far too many men in this building answering their BlackBerry in the washroom while going about their business—

Mr. Mike Colle: Name names.

Mr. Paul Miller: No one hears that, but there could be accidents.

Let's be honest, if you can't resist your BlackBerry in there, it's a good bet that you can't resist it when you're driving your car. When it starts buzzing or bleeping on the highway, you look at it. Even if you don't answer it and even if you don't have any intention of answering, you probably still look at it, and for those two seconds, your eyes aren't on the road. That's distracted driving.

If you absolutely must answer a call, you have two options: (1), Bluetooth hands-free or, (2)—and even better—pull over to the side of the road or a parking lot and deal with the matter.

Speaker, I've been in this House for almost eight years now and in all that time there's never once been a call that was so urgent I couldn't wait two minutes to answer. Too many people in this building haven't learned that lesson yet. I'll make an exception for the Premier's communication staff at the moment. I don't envy their jobs.

In conclusion: This is generally a good bill. It should help to improve the safety on our roads. It should help to reduce the needless loss of life on our roads, and we're happy to support Bill 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It appears that this debate has gone to the dump, if you will.

The opposition parties are needlessly extending the debate on Bill 31 by continuing to put up speakers. This bill has now been debated for over 11 hours. That's right. Over 62 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate and comments.

Listening to the debate that's been going on here this afternoon, it is quite clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill. In fact, it has incorporated private members' bills from members across this House. I'm sure they want to see this bill going on to the next phase, and all we're seeing is further debate that really is unnecessary for us to achieve what we want here, which is to get this bill to go on to the next level. Their only goal has been to delay.

So I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us move forward this important piece of legislation so we can continue to debate other bills, like the pension bill and the Ontario Immigration Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Lanark—sorry, the member for Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sorry to confuse you there, but we were confused, I guess.

Anyway, I listened to what the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek said—very good, very good,

especially the last part I thought was very good and very amusing.

That's something that the member from Davenport certainly has a problem with. This is what we're here for, for Pete's sake. If you don't want to extend this debate, don't get up. That's the way it works. Sit down there, instead of getting up and criticizing us for doing what we're supposed to be doing. That's why we were elected to be here.

1620

I think there's something I would like to bring up, if I can get a chance to talk about it. I'm sure the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek knows that truck traffic is an issue, certainly around Hamilton and around some of the major cities. Nobody has talked about the last section here about extending the lengths of B-trains in Ontario. I've asked the member from Cambridge to look into that as she is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation. They're only targeting B-trains, and that's fine, but there are more trailer systems in Ontario than just B-trains, so I don't understand why they're just extending the B-trains. I do know, having experience with driving a truck, that if you can take those tractors and hook them on to other trailers—are they going to be illegal if you do that? Anyway, I've asked the member from Cambridge to look into that and she said she would. I certainly look forward to that.

But I think people on this side are really getting tired of those people sitting over there wanting to shut down the debate. That's ridiculous, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand on behalf of my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh and make comments on my colleague, the stand-up comic, from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek who was very entertaining this afternoon.

But first if I could address the members opposite: the members from Mississauga-Streetsville, Kitchener Centre, Durham, Davenport, and I believe the Chair of Cabinet when they say, "Sit down and shut up. We've heard enough." What you're saying is, "We don't want to hear from you guys anymore because we've had our turn. We don't want to hear from you."

We are 107 equal voices in this Legislature. We are all governed by the same rules, the same regulations, the same time constraints, and we over here don't stand up and say, "We've heard enough from you. Please get out of here," and that's what you're saying to us. You are showing great disrespect for the Legislature, for the people who elected us and sent us here to have our voices heard, and we wish to be heard. We wish to represent the various voices from across this great province of Ontario. We don't need you to tell us that you don't want to hear from us anymore. Our job is to stand in this House and let you know what our constituents feel about any proposed legislation that you bring forward. That's why we're here today and that's why you will listen or you

will leave the room, because we are not going to stop speaking.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about dooring, when cars are driving down and someone opens the door and hits a cyclist. I feel I've been doored by the Liberals today. They're trying to elbow us out of the way because they've had their turn and they don't want us to be heard. Guess what? It's not going to happen. Get over it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise and add my comments to the speech from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. The speech was very entertaining, I must say.

I also want to add my voice to what our colleagues have been saying. This is not about shutting anybody down. The people that we all represent expect us to get work done, expect us to change things and to improve things in the province of Ontario, so when we speak on a bill, we all speak in rotation. We're making comments on the speech from the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, so we all get a turn. It's not that we've spoken to the bill and you haven't. We're all speaking to this equally.

All we are trying to say is that after a certain number of hours, in this case over 11 hours of debate, perhaps, since we are in consensus—we're agreeing with the principle of the bill; we're highlighting the benefits that this bill would bring to the people that we represent—if we were not in agreement, it would be different, but since we are, let's move it forward and let's make the changes that the people we represent expect us to make. We are here to improve the quality of life for everyday Ontarians, and we have to keep that in mind with every debate and every word that we add to a bill. This is why I am encouraging my colleagues to move it forward to the next step. This is all I and my colleagues on this side of the House are asking for. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members who commented on my points. A couple of them were a little dismayed. It's bad enough it's so serious in here. A little bit of humour doesn't hurt all of us.

I listened to the member from, I believe, Durham and, I think, the member from Kitchener Centre—I'm not sure. They said this omnibus bill should move through quickly; we shouldn't debate for long periods of time because it's their bill. Well, I hate to say this, but we have some very good bills on the books from the official opposition and the third party, who sit at committee, that don't get brought forward unless it's either stolen by the Liberals to use it as their own or stalled till they feel like bringing it to the order paper.

If you want to talk about stalling, I've got a bill in there that all parties agreed upon, the bill to protect child

actors. They all agree on it and all of them say it's a great bill and it's wonderful and it's fantastic. Does it get to third reading? Does it get to royal assent? No, but they all love it. I don't know what happens; they try to blame other House leaders. The bottom line is that if you really are honest about things and you want to get things done and you really care about bills that help all Ontarians—that help us all, that protect kids—then you should be bringing those types of bills forward too, and you don't.

My question to the ruling party is that if you want to speed bills through that suit your agenda—if you want to do that—that's fine. But let's not leave out the other parties who have a major contribution to make, who are totally ignored in this House 99% of the time. That's the problem with a majority government. They do whatever they want. They laugh at you, they dismiss you, they don't do anything that's good for the people of Ontario. When you people stand up and start doing things that are good for the people of Ontario from all of us, not just you, you'll get my respect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought your speech was good, Paul.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Jim.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It generally is a pleasure to join this debate on Bill 31, the making the roads safer act, because there are a number of things that have yet to be mentioned, and I feel it's very important to go on record so that this debate reflects the constituents in my riding. I think it's absolutely shameful that the government, on the opposite side of the House, is trying to shut down debate today. Speaker, the last time I checked, democracy was about allowing everyone an opportunity to make a difference in decision-making, and this government cannot railroad us off to the side.

To that end, in terms of railroading, I want to pick up specifically on B-trains. As the member from Perth–Wellington mentioned, not a lot of people have spoken about B-trains at this stage of the game. There's one thing in particular: We're looking at extending trailer combinations. When I was general manager of the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative, we had tandem trucks with pups, we had 26,000-litre trailers. It takes a lot of horsepower to pull that type of vehicle and trailer behind.

Looking at extending trailer combinations, we have to also address the potential impacts resulting from transports increased in size inappropriately travelling on our rural and local roadways. For instance, in our business, when we're hauling milk during winter, especially when the frost was coming out on the roads, you can only haul two thirds of your normal weight. So now they're taking a look at extending trailer combinations. Ladies and gentlemen, that's going to have an impact on exactly the efficiencies of these combinations, and moreover, the

impact of the weight that's being hauled on our local roadways.

1630

I bring this up specifically because right now in Toronto, Good Roads and the Rural Ontario Municipalities Association are hosting their annual conference. The biggest concern over and over and over again is that this Liberal government has cut back infrastructure dollars. Rural municipalities have been struck by decreased OMPF funding, and they're being absolutely stonewalled when it comes to applying for infrastructure dollars.

Ladies and gentlemen of this House, we just had a member opposite talk about "spend, spend, spend." Well, let me tell you, if you stopped, stopped, stopped your wastefulness on scandals and hiding all the absolutely dishonest things that you're doing, maybe we'd have a little bit of money left over to appropriately invest in all of Ontario. But, no. Instead, we're wasting dollars on Liberal scandals, which is absolutely shameful.

Again, if we have a bill that's talking about extending trailer combinations, we need to think about all of the impacts. In this particular instance, the extended length of B-trains—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt the member, but I believe she made an unparliamentary remark, and I would ask her to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My goodness. I withdraw.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I don't know what I said. Thank you, Speaker.

When I talk and represent our rural ridings in Ontario, I do get incensed, and it is not right that we have people trying to shut down debates when we should be able to voice concerns. Again, I have to underscore the importance of the lack of infrastructure dollars coming out to all rural Ontarians.

As has been mentioned before, we have the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he actually tried six times to have a private member's initiative whereby gas tax could be shared across this province so municipalities actually have a chance to have dollars to invest. But, unfortunately, this government voted all of them down as well. They shut down opposition opportunities every chance they get.

Another thing that I'd like to talk about specifically, in terms of making the roads safer act is pedestrian safety. There's one element in this bill that reads that both pedestrians and drivers will be responsible for safety at crosswalks.

It's interesting that in the last few months that we've been experiencing some proactiveness in the city of Toronto with the new mayor, it has been brought to our attention that pedestrians need to be mindful of their Ps and Qs as well. For instance, when that number comes up at the crosswalk, it means that you don't have 10 to 15 seconds to race across and hold up traffic; it means that when that hand goes up, you need to stop at the sidewalk.

It's interesting, because, as some of you may know, I live on a farm. Last week, I had to bring the truck into

work here in Toronto. It's a little bit bigger than most of the cars that typically use streets in downtown Toronto. The looks that I got from pedestrians because I had a Ford F-150 trying to make a left-hand turn—it was as if I was the person in the wrong. It's very aggravating when pedestrians do not observe the rules of the road. So I think we have to, in the spirit of the making-the-roads-safer act—we need to ensure that pedestrians are held accountable for their part in making the roads safer as well.

Another element of this bill that I want to draw attention to that hasn't really been touched on in detail is medical reports. Time and time again, I have constituents coming to both my offices in my riding, in Kincardine and Blyth, concerned because it's taking an extraordinary amount of time to get their licence back. Again, we have to be taking a look at efficiencies in terms of transparency and accountability. This Liberal government needs to make sure that they're accountable to efficiencies within the system, because they're lacking every which way you look at it. So I encourage, in terms of the making-the-roads-safer act and getting people back in a mobile position, in rural Ontario specifically—we need to take a look at facilitating and processing medical reports in a more efficient way.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is paved shoulders. The honourable member from Parry Sound–Muskoka introduced his private member's initiative to get shoulders paved once and for all, and we credit him for doing that. But the fact of the matter is, again, if we're sharing the roads, everyone must adhere to the rules of the road.

I need to make mention that in my riding, we have a situation whereby people do not respect farm implements on the road. In the spring and fall there is heavy traffic, and cottagers racing to the lakeshore or people in a hurry, trying to operate their office out of their vehicles, turn in disgust when they get held up by farm implements that have every right to be on the road. The farmers are observing the rules of the road. I think we need to make sure that when this bill finally makes it to committee, we work with our farm organizations to make sure their concerns are heard with regard to ensuring everyone is doing their part in making roads safer, because they feel they're at risk when people do not respect their right to be on that road as well.

There's a whole host of things that we could talk about with regard to this bill. Recognizing that my time has quickly ticked away here, I want to touch a little bit on bicycling. As the official opposition critic for the environment and climate change, I support bicycling wherever it's possible. It encourages active, healthy living and it reduces emissions and gridlock on our roads.

Living in rural Ontario, I'm a driver, as are most of my constituents. But when I come to the city, I am actually taken aback by the number of cyclists who do not obey and respect the rules of the road. They are on side-walks. They're in bicycle lanes. They're on your right side. They're on your left side. They're very, very inconsistent. While we need to be mindful of enabling more

cyclists to use the road, I think we have to advocate for further education and awareness. That education and awareness points to the fact that everyone on the road is responsible for safety, both cyclists and drivers.

In terms of dooring, bicyclists on the one hand must be aware of the vehicle's blind spots; and on the other, drivers must be aware of the potential hazards when opening a vehicle.

I'd like to conclude by reflecting on comments that were shared by my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh. The pushback we're getting as we debate really does feel like a dooring. We can't allow the government to push us aside when I, in this particular debate, have raised local issues. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to get up and speak after the member from Huron—Bruce. You know, I lived in Huron—Bruce for two years as a United Church clergyperson. It was my first posting. I have to say that it's way easier to drive around the city of Toronto than it is to drive in winter on the roads in Huron—Bruce, so you definitely have a vested interest in this bill. I saw complete whiteout conditions; I had to be towed out of ditches there. It was quite something. Even the rain in Huron—Bruce—a beautiful, beautiful place, fabulous people, but oh, my goodness, I'm glad I'm driving, taking the TTC or walking in TO and not out there.

What she went over and what many of us have gone over are a couple of issues. Number one, clearly from the notes given out across the aisle—listen: We are here in this place to debate, and we are here to debate for a reason. I wish, as the government says, everything could be taken care of in committee, but we know the simple reality is that when these bills go to committee, the government does not take amendments put forward by the opposition seriously and does not pass amendments put forward by the opposition very often. So this is the only chance the opposition has to raise critical issues. We raise them more than once because we hope that we effect change across the aisle, we hope that they listen and we hope that they then move on the amendments, many of which have been very positive that have been suggested over here.

That's the point of debate: to make better legislation. That's why. Because no matter who you are, the first iteration of a bill is not necessarily the best one, not to mention, of course, that it is the democratic way. That's why we debate and that's why it's important.

Number two, there are issues with this bill that need to be looked at. Again, we hope that we've effected some change, that people are listening and that they take note.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to begin by saying that I've listened to debate in the House about this bill, and it's very clear that this bill is about public safety. Each member I've heard speak has spoken in support of the bill.

Now, we heard the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek say it's an omnibus bill. I don't think it's an omnibus bill, but it's certainly a bill that's pulled together a lot of different ideas, like the private member's bill from the member from Parkdale—High Park on cycling, that's there, and the bill that was put forward by the member from Scarborough—Rouge River and actually the member from Nepean—Carleton put together for that bill on distracted driving, which I think all members of this House have spoken passionately about. I know that the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka had a bill as well that had to do with paved shoulders—a very important bill. There are more ideas than that that have been incorporated in this bill. That's why it's important to move forward.

I respect the member from Windsor—Tecumseh's comments that we all have a voice, but I also think that public safety is something that is imperative for us in this House. We've all spoken about it. We have all been supportive of it. Many of us have put forward bills in support of those public safety measures. So we can debate about debate, and that's great, but what we need to do is make sure that these public safety measures get moving forward. Let's get them to committee. Let's get them done, and then we can have another chance to debate debate somewhere further on down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and contribute in some small way to the debate. I'd like to acknowledge the member from Huron—Bruce. She covered a number of areas that I haven't heard today. I've been here all day, either in here or in the salon next door, listening as well, and I don't think anybody talked about trailer combinations or the aspect that she spoke about, which is very important to the industries that she was involved with, as well as other industry in Ontario. It takes that kind of background that everybody brings to this House from different backgrounds before they were elected to this august chamber. So it's important that people have that opportunity to stand in their place, as they're elected to do by their colleagues and their voters back home—sent to this place to contribute to debate and contribute to overall legislation.

There's a number of things that we talk about in there. I agree with merit points, but the devil's in the details there, as I said a little earlier. Another one that we're concerned with is that this could be another Drive Clean 2.0 as they bring this in.

I do agree with the gathering of unpaid fines. I know that's a big problem in all of Ontario. It's a big issue in my riding, so I certainly support that aspect. I'm sure there are other aspects of it as well that go forward.

It's the other jurisdictions that members have spoken to, and I think it's important that members bring their background and their ideas here. The government doesn't always get it right. The government even admits that sometimes, that it's through debate in here in the clear light of day and in committee that improvements are

made to different bills, and initial iterations aren't always the final arbiter of the debate.

I think it's great that we have this debate. We're here today, and that's what we're paid to do, and so I'm glad to rise. I commend the member from Huron–Bruce on her remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Huron–Bruce always brings the perspective of her riding to this place, and as it relates to Bill 31, I think she brings a unique perspective actually. Rural, somewhat isolated communities see this legislation through a different lens, and that's what's important about this debate, that we are charged, as elected officials, to bring forward those voices to this place, and I think she did a very good job in that regard.

OGRA/ROMA is obviously going on right now, as is OGRA—the Ontario Good Roads Association and ROMA. We met with them this morning, and they actually articulated some of the concerns that the member from Huron–Bruce brought forward as well, certainly around the revenue streams that municipalities need so desperately. They have been asking this government for so long to at least be able to have extended powers around collecting on OPP fines, because rural communities like Huron–Bruce continue to be shortchanged on the infrastructure file. They have identified this through what I think is quite an amazing system of asset management and inventory around the bridge system across rural communities. They have actually been leading the charge in this regard, and in some respects the government is trying to catch up somewhat.

But they need that revenue stream. There's a motion on the table—it's long-standing—that they put in some conditions of transparency and accountability with regard to those revenue streams, specifically for infrastructure. Why not give the municipalities the power to collect on those OPP fines? This piece of legislation is one step in the right direction in that regard, but it's our responsibility to make sure that this government follows through, because those communities deserve that revenue stream as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, it's always a privilege to stand in this House and voice concerns on behalf of the constituents of my riding. I appreciate very much the comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park. She fully gets the amazing opportunity to live in a rural riding like Huron–Bruce, and I appreciate that very much.

To the member from Sarnia–Lambton: Thank you very much for recognizing that it's extremely important that debate happens in this House and doesn't get shut down, because we all do indeed bring different experiences that can impact and make a difference in legislation as it evolves through the debate process to final reading.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: Thank you very much for recognizing that, when it comes to making roads safer, we need to make sure that all 444 of our municipalities do indeed have the ability, and the dollars behind them, to ensure that they are doing their part and investing in infrastructure.

I saved, last but not least, the member from Ottawa South, because sadly I have to say that there was nothing in his comments that addressed specifically what I was saying. It shows a continual disconnect between rural Ontario and some members across the floor, and that's disappointing, because this is an opportunity to raise awareness. Hopefully it's a two-way conversation, a two-way road that can enhance an opportunity to make legislation better.

Again, when I think about this particular act and making roads safer, at the end of the day we need to make sure that all 444 municipalities across Ontario have the revenue and the capacity to make our roads safer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wasn't really prepared to say much this afternoon, but I've been encouraged by members from the government to stand up and say a few words. Perhaps out of my 10 minutes you'll find something in there that you hadn't heard before, as I did from the member from Huron–Bruce when she talked about the load limits on roads and the extent of the trailers.

When you represent regions of the province, rural areas, that the Liberal government doesn't represent—I'm the member closest to the city of London, all the way down—you know, there are no government members until you get to London. We represent parts of the province that your party doesn't have a voice in, so I think it's important to listen, and perhaps to learn a little bit more about what people in other parts of the province are saying.

I know that in Windsor–Tecumseh we take our jobs seriously. We have a high unemployment rate, so when we get a job, we pay particular attention to it.

1650

I want to argue on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario on the need to make our roads and streets in our province safe for motorists, pedestrians and those who ride or operate bicycles. We in the NDP caucus favour much of what the bill has to offer. Let's be upfront about that. But there are bits and pieces of it that we would like to see improved.

For example, the minister wants to take away the public's right to be heard—actually, to be consulted; a stronger word, I believe. What do you think, Speaker? Would you rather be heard or consulted? Right, consulted. You would rather be consulted, I would imagine, as I would. However, the minister's priority—and I stress the word "priority" because the very first thing the minister addresses in this bill, in the very first paragraph on page i, the explanatory note to the bill, is that the minister is going to "remove the requirement that the Minister of Transportation conduct an annual review, including pub-

lic consultation, on the amount of the toll for the following year" on Highway 407.

Well, isn't that a kick in the teeth. So much for openness, so much for fairness and transparency, and so much for representing the best interests of all the taxpayers in Ontario, many of whom would like to have a say, as they've had, in any increase that the private operators of the 407 say they are entitled to each and every year.

The minister used to have a policy that just in case there was a problem in the mailing of the billing, just in case it slipped your mind or the dog ate your homework and the bill that came from the 407, you were always given a second chance, a second written notice that you failed to pay a toll when you drove on the 407. But this toll to the minister's friends—now they are going to take these draconian steps to deny you the right to get a new registration sticker for your plate without giving you a second notice.

Now, I don't know about you guys, but I've heard time and time again, long before I ever came here, about people getting bills for being on the 407 when their car or their truck was parked in the driveway in Windsor or Waterloo or Wawa. They weren't anywhere near the 407, but they got a bill because those plate-readers are not always accurate. They make mistakes. The numbers get jumbled. There might be some snow on the plate, some mud on the plate. So people get a bill and the first thing they do: "Well, it doesn't apply to me. I'll throw it away." Well, now, if they throw it away, there's no second notice saying, "You know, if you don't pay this, you're not going to get your sticker." Right?

No second notice: Why are they doing that? Why is the government taking away the second notice billing? I'm just guessing. Maybe, if indeed at some point in the future our friends in the government want to install some kind of a billing system for the commuter toll roads in Ontario—if they are going to do that, then maybe they won't send out a second notice that you're late in a payment either. So they'll set the precedent on the 407. Why else would you deny the public's right to a consultation on a fee and why would you take away the second notice? I don't get it. I just don't get it.

Speaker, I have to tell you—it shouldn't come as any surprise, I'm sure—that we in the New Democratic Party believe there should be a public consultation on highway tolls on the 407, and we believe you should have a second notice before you lose your right to renew your sticker because you didn't get the bill or you forgot about it or you lost it or it went somewhere else.

When we were starting this debate last week, the Tuesday we came back, I remember the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the member from Peterborough, was saying that when the Conservatives sold the 407, it was the biggest scandal of the 20th century. I believe the minister without portfolio, the Chair of Cabinet, agreed. Well, if that was a scandal then, this is as much of a scandal now: taking away the public's right to be consulted on any toll increase on the 407 and stripping

away the public's opportunity for a second bill just in case that first never gets through.

There are other things in the bill, I must say, that we will support. They make sense, are overdue and deserve to be supported because I would hope we all want to keep Ontario safe.

I believe we in Ontario have a good reputation when it comes to highway safety. I read somewhere that Ontario roadways are the safest in North America, yet every 18 hours someone is killed in a highway accident on Ontario roads.

Distracted and impaired drivers are responsible for most of those fatalities. You can be impaired by alcohol or drugs or a combination of both. You might be on your cellphone; you might be on your cellphone on alcohol; on your cellphone on alcohol and on drugs; and you're asking for trouble.

I'm all for making Ontario roads safer, and there is much to be done. For one thing, we can strip it down to the fundamentals and get involved when we talk about the design of Ontario roads, especially on the 400 series of highways. I know when you enter Ontario from Michigan in Windsor—say you come across the bridge or the tunnel and get on the 401—we have a divided highway, a cement median barrier that separates the east-bound and the west-bound lanes. It's like that all the way through Essex county right into Chatham-Kent. That is where a problem comes in.

During the summer election last year I was in my campaign office when I had a visit from the parents of a young girl, a 13-year-old girl, who was in a car driven by her 35-year-old uncle. They were on their way to London for a family vacation. The driver of a transport truck coming towards Windsor in the westbound lane lost control, came over the centre—there was no cement barrier—and collided head-on. So 35-year-old Marc Lafontaine and 13-year-old Alyssa Smulders both lost their lives. The girl's parents, Jason Smulders and Denise Lafontaine, agonized over it. They came to see me. I said, "I can't make this an election issue; I can't make you any promises." The only commitment I can make, Speaker, was to promise to arrange for a meeting with ministry officials after the election was over, if I was re-elected. We would talk to them about highway design and whether, in fact, the ministry felt that if there was a cement barrier, those Jersey-type barriers, that would have prevented the accident.

In October I did arrange for the meeting. The ministry officials came down from London. It was a very stressful meeting. The parents were still very upset, and I can understand that. But at the end of the day I have to commend the ministry for sending those officials down and talking to the parents, because they wanted to be heard. They wanted to voice their opinion on the design of 400-series highways. That meeting did take place. I'd just like to say they were given no assurances that designs would change, but at least they have the feeling now that the government did listen, their member did listen, and a meeting was held.

I thank you for your time. I'm sorry I ran out of time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I am pleased to speak on Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act. Mr. Speaker, safety of the roads is paramount for our government, and Ontario's roads are among the safest ones in North America. Guess under whose watch? Under this government's watch.

The opposition parties are needlessly extending this debate on Bill 31. The bill has now been debated for 12 hours, and over 63 members of this Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in debate during questions and comments.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh said that he's in favour of the bill. Listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill. Let's pass this bill as soon as possible so it goes to committee and in the committee we hear from the public. We need to hear from them. We need their input.

1700

So I'm calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us move this important piece of legislation forward so we can continue to debate other bills. We are wasting the time and money of the taxpayers, which is not the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it was a pleasure listening to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh raise some new subject matter that we hadn't heard this afternoon and that added tremendously to the debate. I will mention this: As I was listening to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, I was looking at the Liberal benches. There were 13 members in this Legislature, and only one, the member from Ottawa South, was actually listening to the debate. One member was listening to the debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to say to the member that you can't make reference to the absence of members, individually or as a group. You've got the floor for—

Mr. Randy Hillier: That was not my intention, Speaker. I was just making reference to the count that I see here. But then I hear the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, who was not listening at all, who then stands up in her place and says that this is needless discussion. She has heedless ears that are not working.

This debate is important. The member for Windsor-Tecumseh added tremendous value—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Chair of Cabinet to withdraw his remark.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Withdrawn.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see that the government member is doing the appropriate thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I think it's very important that we all add our voice to this debate. Many of the members have spoken about this. I think it's absolutely important that we recognize that everyone in this House has an equal opportunity and an equal responsibility to share the concerns of their riding and their constituents. I think that's something we should encourage instead of discouragement.

When it comes to this bill, I think I have to agree with my colleague from Windsor. At the beginning of his speech he said, "I'm hopeful there is some content of my speech that will provide you with some insight that you hadn't had before." I think he absolutely accomplished that when he spoke about the 407.

It's very curious to me why this government is taking away that second notice. That's troubling, particularly given the fact that we all know that the 407 in general has been an entire debacle in terms of the deal that was struck and how that has severely impacted our province. In fact, the Liberal Party has been openly critical of the Conservatives, but you're now making that problem, that mistake, even worse by making it more unfair.

There was already a problem with respect to the way that deal was struck and the way that Ontario did not get its fair share. People have already complained about the fact that they're receiving bills in an unfair manner and bills that sometimes are given to the wrong person. There was at least one mechanism that provided some—maybe small, but at least some—form of accountability, some form of redress, perhaps some form of double-check, and that was getting the second notice. By removing that, you're making a situation that's unfair more unfair, and really there's no reason to do so. I think that was a great point raised by the member from Windsor.

In fact, there are a number of points, but I really don't have enough time to address them all because my time is up. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill 31 as well.

As you've all gotten to know me over time you know that I'm a great team player in all aspects of the things that our government does, but I want to tell you, on this one point that has been raised recently, I do appreciate all the additional debate that goes on in this House. I think this debate would have been much poorer if not for the scatological humour of the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

I really do have to agree with the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington that the member from Windsor-Tecumseh did raise some interesting new points here. That agreement and that praise of the member raising that aspect just sort of got lost with the subsequent verbatim issues that he started to address.

But it is very important that you raise some of the issues around the 407 just to show that we were listening,

because that is our nature, to listen and pick up on some of the good ideas coming forward. You do, of course, know you would only make the mistake once of ignoring that letter, if it resulted in a plate denial. You're going to learn from those experiences. It makes it a lot more efficient of a system; you don't need to be constantly reminded and reminded, paper after paper. You should know that if you are charged with a violation or charged for the 407 use, you should pay for it. And if you weren't there, you're going to have to go and make that case. But you also know that when it comes to consultations, we do listen. The government does want to be consulted with.

You'll know, Mr. Speaker, that the 407 is currently on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for comments from all members of this House, but all constituents and people of Ontario can go to the registry and make comments right now on issues around the 407, and we encourage you to do it.

The rates associated with the 407 are of course tied to inflation. It's another efficiency in the system so that we don't have to have it opened up for consultation every single time and waste taxpayers' time and money. It is tied to inflation.

So go to the registry, make your comments, encourage your constituents, and let's carry on this excellent debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to comment on the comments that were made by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member from Beaches-East York.

It does pain me to say that if indeed you were listening, on the other side of the House, you might choose to ignore your speaking notes for a moment when a member of the opposition relates a very sad and tragic tale about two lives lost, including a 13-year-old girl, and the member from Mississauga-Brampton South says, from her speaking notes, "You're wasting our time. It's a waste of time here today, this should go to committee." Now that was a disgusting comment. That comment had no place in this debate this afternoon.

I realize we all have speaking notes. We all refer to them from time to time. But when a member gets up and tells you about a tragic fatality, and has met with the parents of a young daughter, and all they're doing is trying to improve something—improve the design of the 401—and my job is to bring that to the floor, and I'm told by the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, "What a waste of time"—seriously folks, you're losing perspective here.

I know the speaking notes say, "Shut them down, send it to committee," but when you pull crap like that you hurt your dignity. You hurt whatever integrity you thought you had. It only goes back on you; it doesn't come to us. We're doing our job. We're raising the points that we feel we've been elected to do, and when you pull stunts like that you diminish this chamber, you diminish the debate and you diminish democracy—shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

1710

Mr. Randy Hillier: You did that so smoothly, Speaker. It's as if you had just been there recently.

It's my pleasure to speak about Bill 31. Before I speak about the merits of the bill, I want to first speak to the priority that has been placed on this bill: where it ranks in the Liberal agenda.

We know—it has been mentioned briefly by some members this afternoon—that Ontario has the safest roads in, indeed, all of Confederation and quite possibly all of North America. The safety of our roads is excellent by any measure. By the hundreds of thousands of kilometres driven, by the hundreds of thousands of licensed drivers or by population, Ontario has safe roads, and we should commend everybody for that.

But what we don't have is short waiting times in our hospitals. What we don't have is a reduced unemployment level in this province. What we don't have is a wealth of prosperity. We have economic stagnation; high unemployment; we have extended wait times in our health care system—but we have a bill in front of the House to address a whole myriad of concerns and problems with what we're doing well in this province. Just remember: By any measure, we have safe roads—the safest roads in the country.

Then you look through some of the merits of the bill. I have to draw the members' attention to page iii of Bill 31. It's in the fourth paragraph from the bottom. I read this: "Pedestrians (which includes persons in wheelchairs) must not enter a crossover and into the path of a vehicle or streetcar that is so close that the driver cannot stop"—must not be allowed to enter the path of an oncoming vehicle that is so close, it cannot stop. Clearly, by deduction, we understand that that is an injury; that's a collision. There's going to be somebody injured, quite possibly fatally. What is this bill going to do to prevent that from happening? We're going to also fine the person who has just been injured in that collision.

Is that really important? Do you think that is going to prevent somebody from doing that after they've been injured, maybe very tragically injured, that you're now also going to fine them? My God. What sort of thinking is in that?

Really, it's important to recognize—just as I mentioned earlier about the level of people listening to this debate, I think it also applies to the number of people who have actually read the legislation, not just your talking points.

Further on page iii, the last paragraph: Every person who goes to a physician or an optometrist or a number of regulated health care professionals—if they have an injury or an illness or a condition, that health care professional must report that condition to the MTO. I have that case in my office. One of my staff members has MS. She's about 40 years of age. She has never driven, never plans on driving, will never get a driver's licence, but

every time she goes to the physician, her physician has to report her to the MTO.

What sort of needless bureaucracy is that, making physicians and health care professionals engage in the administration and reporting of people's driving abilities who don't drive? Is that the world of Liberalese or weasel-ese? I'm not sure.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You can't say that.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I'm also going to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will have to ask the member to withdraw that remark.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Absolutely. "Liberalese"? Oh, "weasel"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Say "I withdraw."

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Speaker, now we can go to page iv, third paragraph down. I'm just saying what the explanatory note is. I know nobody's read the clauses, so I'm just going to speak about the explanatory note and hopefully draw their attention to this.

The minister "may establish a program" for the inspection of vehicles and the issuance of certificates and stickers and blah, blah, blah, and "appoint a director of vehicle inspection standards" and stickers and blah, blah, blah. Okay? A new director.

I've not heard anything from the Liberal benches as to what this will cost. How big a bureaucracy are they going to create with the new director of stickers? It's an important question. We are in a deficit position. We have a significant debt, and now we're going to have a director general of stickers. I'd like to know how much the stickers and the director of the stickers are going to cost us. I hope it doesn't infringe or impede upon the minister's fantasy world of reducing the budget and eliminating the deficit by 2018, but we don't know because we just don't know how much the bloody stickers are going to cost us.

We can go on and on through this bill. I'm sorry, to all the members on the Liberal benches, for having somewhat of a dissident position on their marvellous Bill 31, but it does cause me concern when I read through bills that are not well thought out and not well drafted. That's part of the debate as well.

I want to also say that I've been in this chamber now for near eight years. I've seen legislation after legislation after legislation, all brought forward to remedy the ills of our province—remedy all the ills. All of these bills have been well intended, they tell me, and they are all there to address a problem and create a remedy. You would think now, after this period of time, we would be living in Eden or Shangri-La or Utopia with all the legislation that has been brought forward to remedy the ills of our province. But then you see this bill where we're actually maybe creating some new ailments with the new director of vehicles and stickers, or creating needless additional paperwork for our health care professionals to report about a driver who doesn't drive but may have a condi-

tion that may affect their driving when they're not driving.

I would ask the Liberal members to ponder that for a moment. Why have we not got Utopia here yet with all the legislation? We should be on the Big Rock Candy Mountain or something if their legislation was indeed effective and good. But more often than not, it's window dressing. Much like the distracted driver, it's distracted legislators on the Liberal bench who read from talking points, who don't read the legislation, and who don't understand the consequences of it.

I put this as the final token: If all this legislation provided the remedies that it was intended to, why are all our offices continually inundated with calls from constituents who are feeling the injustice and the unfairness of the administration of government?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

1720

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for his well-thought-out comments.

Speaker, one of the biggest problems this government has—or any government, for that matter—is enforcement. For many years, I've dealt with the environment. For many years, I've dealt with labour issues with the Ministry of Labour. What we don't have is enough inspectors; we don't have enough enforcement. The fines are minimal at best, even when there is a fatality. It's actually just a spinning of the wheels when the government comes out with these great bills that they think are going to be effective. But enforcement is the problem. They are not enforced. Until you can enforce your own rules, then you're kind of waving in the wind.

I've seen a lot of things over the years where wonderful legislation goes unheard of, coming from the opposition bench or the third party. The government is in a real rush to get this to committee, because they think it's going to get them political points, and that's fine. But the bottom line is, when we contribute something, the process slows down. It goes to committee. It dies on the order paper, because either it's not their idea, or they want to slow it down and take the idea, or they want to soften it or change some of the amendments to suit the people who lobby them.

Speaker, I've seen this from day one. It happens in all Parliaments, unfortunately, when people stand up and say, "Let's expedite this bill; let's get it through," because it's a government bill. But when it comes to good bills on this side, they drag their feet. Nothing gets done until they feel like they should bring it forward, with changes under their name.

It's unfortunate. They are doing a disservice to the people of this province and have been since I've been here. The people of Ontario are getting shortchanged, no pun intended.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Monsieur le Président, c'est avec—

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Plaisir.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Plaisir—merci, mon ami—

M. Shafiq Qaadri: D'accord.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: —d'être ici et de mentionner ce qu'on essaie de faire en Chambre et ce qu'on essaie de suggérer à nos membres de l'opposition. Le projet de loi 31 nous parle de la sécurité publique. La sécurité publique, ce que ça veut dire et ce que ça comporte, c'est vraiment de favoriser et de s'engager à protéger nos enfants sur la route à tous les jours. Après 13 heures—et je répète, 13 heures, 13 hours—de débat en Chambre, je crois qu'il est—

M^{me} Cristina Martins: Ça suffit.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: —suffisant—merci, Cristina—de montrer notre engagement à la population de l'Ontario, aux gens de l'Ontario, et de faire avancer ce projet de loi en comité.

Donc, merci beaucoup, et j'espère que j'ai fait mon point. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few moments of comments on my good friend and colleague the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

I appreciate the previous comments by the member for Ottawa—Orléans. I listened to her comments with translation. It really doesn't matter whether it's said in English or in French; democracy is going to continue in this place.

I've checked with the table. Earlier today, I spoke for 10 minutes. I probably could have spoken for longer. In fact, because I missed so many points, I'm going to ask for unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for an extra 10 minutes, so that I can get all of my comments on the record. Will we deal with that motion first, and I'll continue with my questions and comments?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Leeds—Grenville is seeking unanimous consent of the House to continue his remarks on Bill 31.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to advise the member that he can't even make that request. He can't make the request during questions and comments, and I apologize. You still have the floor for your questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate your ruling, and I will respect it. However—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would have said yes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm sure you would have.

I just want to put on the record that there are members who haven't been heard—for example, the member for Simcoe North, who sponsored his private member's bill regarding tow truck operators. It's section 48 of the bill. He worked very long and hard. He first introduced that bill. I've got a press release from Mr. Dunlop and the CAA back on March 5, 2012. He has worked for many

years to have this bill put forward in legislation the government has added.

There are members of our side who still have not been heard and who have new information that they'd like to put on the table. I've placed it on the record, but I want to thank my colleague. He made some wonderful comments. I'd like to know some more information about the director of stickers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and indeed, thank you to the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for his comments this afternoon.

If I could, I want to go back. I ran out of time during my 10 minutes. I was going to tell you a story about the meeting that I had with ministry officials and the parents of the young girl who had died. When the ministry officials came to my office, one of them was from St. Catharines, or formerly lived in St. Catharines—with the ministry. During the course of our dialogue prior to the meeting, I mentioned that I was a former chair of the conservation authority and planted tons and tons of trees. She said, "Let me tell you a story. Back in St. Catharines, when I worked there, Jim Bradley was the member."

Jim was known not only for going to every sporting event in the St. Catharines/Toronto/Buffalo area, he also really liked to get out with the students and mix it up with them. If they had a tree-planting, he wanted to be there. He wanted to take part. The kids all knew that, but one day I guess he was held up in the terrible traffic backlog between here and St. Catharines—and the Niagara area, where there should be a Via train or GO train. The principal and the teachers wanted to move this tree-planting ceremony along—"Jim's not going to get here; we'll just do it anyway"—and when the kids found out about it, there was a student protest. They said, "No. We want Jim! We want Jim!"

I tell you that story because the ministry people who came travel the province and get to know a bunch of people, but they spoke very highly of the Chair of Cabinet and minister without portfolio. I just wanted to mention that. I'm sorry I ran out of time earlier during my 10-minute presentation—not that we want Jim anymore this afternoon, but they wanted him back then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Ottawa—Orléans, Leeds—Grenville and Windsor—Tecumseh. I will just reiterate what the member for Leeds—Grenville said. It doesn't matter which language the member from Ottawa—Orléans speaks in when she is trying to shut down debate; it's understandable in all languages, and I would really suggest, instead of just reading talking points, maybe actually reading the legislation as well.

But that leads me to this: As I'm reading through this bill and seeing about this new director of stickers, liquors and whatnot, the real thrust behind this bill is that the

Liberal government will have another patronage appointment to offer to Andrew Olivier or someone else such as that when another by-election comes up, because we're not seeing what the cost is or what the purpose is, but the director of liquors—or stickers—would really, truly be a high point for any Liberal member, I'm sure, or any Liberal candidate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is indeed a pleasure to stand up and add a few comments on Bill 31. I'll try to mix it up a little bit, so that people stay interested and don't complain about being repetitive. There are a couple of issues that haven't been raised yet in this House, and I look forward to bringing them to your attention.

Obviously, Bill 31 rolls various other pieces of legislation into one, so there are actually many provisions to discuss in detail. I'm just going to highlight a few of them.

I did want to raise one thing, though, that was brought to our attention earlier today at the OGRA/ROMA conference. They are looking for revenue streams. Municipalities are desperate for some dedicated infrastructure funding. They've been playing this game right now with the ministry around who gets the money. One councillor—actually, it was a mayor—called it the wheel of fortune: how to get funding, here in Ontario, for those communities. They are really pushing for the ability to collect those OPP fines. This is a long-standing ask. It's very rational; it's very organized. It's something that obviously would benefit communities across the province, and they're quite serious about it.

1730

Now, they did raise one issue—and this will lead to my next point—that in order for that to be a successful endeavour for municipalities, it would need the computer systems in the Ministry of Transportation to be able to communicate with the computer systems in the Attorney General's office. I think we can all acknowledge, or we should acknowledge, that this government does not have the best record on computer systems and technology, if you look at SAMS, if you look at eHealth, if you look at the five-year delay for Children and Youth Services with the CAS system to consolidate one central database that keeps track of vulnerable children in the province of Ontario—you've pushed that date to 2020. I think those city councillors and those mayors who are down at the Royal York right now raise a really good point that if that moves forward, and when we get to committee with this, you need to be sure that whomever you employ to design the system has the knowledge to do so. I would suggest, respectfully, that you not outsource this; that you actually rely on the very good people who work here in the Ontario public service for the province of Ontario, unlike what you did with the SAMS program, where you've now hired another specialist to investigate yourselves in some regard.

I told the mayors that I would bring that point here to this Legislature. They're anticipating that Bill 31 can

address this issue. Of course, I think that at one point we were actually all in agreement that this should move forward.

I think the issue that really resonates quite strongly with us in this House is the 407 comments. My colleagues have raised some of the concerns around the lack of consultation and the debate about being heard and being consulted on 407 tolls. I think it actually warrants some attention; that has been long-standing.

Just to remind you, obviously the 407 highway opened in 1997. In 1999, in order to address an \$11-billion deficit, the PC government leased the highway for 99 years to a private operator in exchange for \$3.1 billion. Even in 1999 dollars, that was a really big deal—"deal" as in a bargain. In 2013, the 407 ETR reported revenues of \$801 million and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization of \$664.8 million, so it was really a fairly strong revenue generator for the province, which they gave up.

Recently, in 2012, as part of the budget bill, the government enacted the Highway 407 East Act to govern the eastern extension of the 407. Currently under construction, the new "public" 407 East toll highway will be a P3, operated and maintained for 30 years by mostly the same private companies that run the 407 ETR.

Now, under the agreement between the government and the private operator of the 407 ETR, the registrar of motor vehicles is required to deny licence plate renewals after being notified by the 407 ETR that a driver has not paid their bill. Obviously, the second notice billing process comes into play in this regard.

At issue here right now is the issue of consumer rights. In this instance, the consumers are the people of this province, the citizens of this province who pay for the infrastructure. Of course, I think it also warrants a second look, in that the Auditor General's report that came out just before Christmas—I know that some people would like it to go away; they would like to ignore it. But we shouldn't, because the infrastructure deficit, which is a very strong theme down at the OGRA/ROMA conference, is growing. Infrastructure in the province of Ontario is obviously an economic issue. It's a driver of the economy. She raised some very good concerns that should be paid attention to. This privatization enamour continues to—this government continues to go down that road, which we obviously have raised concerns about for many years. It is not in the best interests of the people of this province.

With this whole expansion around trying to improve safety: great. There are some good things in this bill; we fully support them. But the expansion and the acceleration of privatization around our infrastructure in this province should be a huge red flag for the people.

I'm going to read quickly from the Globe and Mail, from Barrie McKenna. He said, "Revelations that cash-strapped Ontario may have squandered as much as \$8 billion on dozens of infrastructure projects is shocking...."

"But the real stunner for taxpayers is that the province, and governments across the country, risk repeating the same costly mistakes on hundreds of future projects."

You can see, through the legislation, that this government is continuing to go down this path of outsourcing and privatizing, even though we now have so many well-documented examples. We have the data, and yet this government refuses to take a second look at this practice.

Governments in Canada have become seduced by the wonders of private-public partnerships, so-called P3s, and blind to their potentially costly flaws. This is not a government that can afford to continue to waste money. In a typical P3 project, the government pays a private sector group to build, finance and operate, as explained here around the 407, everything from transit lines to hospitals, sometimes over decades.

These projects almost always cost significantly more than if governments just put up the money themselves and hired the contractors to build the same infrastructure under the conventional contracts. As the Auditor General has found—

Applause.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks.

Think of the money that could be freed up if the province went forward instead of continuing down this—pardon the pun—highway of privatization and had a second look at the way that Infrastructure Ontario is actually conducting themselves, at the direction of the government. There are a lot of good people down at Infrastructure Ontario. They have the knowledge, they have the know-how. Governments can borrow money at a much more competitive rate.

The entire direction that this government continues to go down, especially around the consultation or the lack thereof on 407 tolls, and not giving citizens of this province the ability to get a second notice around billing is obviously alarming for us.

Now, I don't want to debate about the debate, but before a Liberal gets up and says, "You know, there's enough debate," I need to tell you that this is our only chance to raise these issues. Because what happens in this new culture of this majority government, which actually is a significant shift from past majority governments, is that our voices do get shut down in committee. We bring forward very progressive amendments, well-researched amendments, and this government time and time again refuses to take those into consideration.

In speaking to some of the people who have been here for a long time and give some historical perspective, this is a shift. It's a shift in attitude, it's a shift in culture that stems from a very emboldened majority government. Quite honestly, if this is our only chance to raise our concerns, then it's our responsibility to do so.

When it gets to committee and you shut us down, like you have done on almost every single piece of legislation, I'll remind you that this was our only chance to raise these issues, it's our job to communicate our concerns and, if you listened, legislation would be stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard throughout the afternoon a lot of interesting debate that has taken place on this bill and some good suggestions have been forthcoming. It's somewhat of a consensus, although not entirely, of a number of bills which have come forward from members on all sides the House.

The bill itself certainly gives us an opportunity to make some significant changes in legislation, which would help to make our roads safer, and I'm very pleased to see that happening at this time.

1740

There have been some suggestions as to how the bill can be improved. I think what will be beneficial is that, when in committee, there are representations made by the public. Often you will have people such as the CAA—people representing them—the Ontario Safety League and others who have a specific interest in the legislation. I can think of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, for instance, who may have some suggestions about this. So I look forward with anticipation to hearing what they have to say and then amendments coming forward. Some of the amendments will flow from the debate which has taken place in this House this afternoon, and there have been some good ideas coming from members from all sides.

In terms of the change in atmosphere and so on, the member has not been in this House a while. I can assure her that I have watched governments over the years, including the one of her stripe which brought in some of the most draconian changes in rules of this House that ever happened; I think about 1993 that happened.

Governments try to accommodate, as much as possible, the debate. There has been considerable debate. When they asked, "Should the debate continue?" at the six-hour mark, the government certainly said that would be the case.

I hope members will continue, at all stages of the bill, to bring forward their ideas to make it an even better bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to be able to offer a couple of comments to the remarks made by the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. I think that she took from the many facets of this bill a particularly interesting one to explore further, and that is the issue around infrastructure and the payment for infrastructure.

Certainly, when we look at the fiscal position of this province and the kind of debt load that it has amassed over the last decade or so, I'm reminded of the comments made by the Auditor General most recently on the issue of the debt, and that is that each person in Ontario, every one of us, owes \$23,000—every person in Ontario—for the debt.

The reason that I make this connection with the infrastructure is the fact that over time infrastructure has always been recognized as a driver of the economy. So when you start to see infrastructure that is crumbling,

infrastructure projects that never get off the ground, what you are doing is condemning the economy of the province or the region in which that investment should be made. So when we look at something such as those points that the member has raised, I think it's an opportunity for us to remember that infrastructure investment is absolutely critical to the economy of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm impressed, of course, as always, by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and her eloquence.

Just a couple of points: The Auditor General—this is not in dispute—said that this government has wasted over \$8 billion on privatization. That \$8 billion could have built a lot of housing, could have provided child care in the province of Ontario, could have almost eradicated poverty. This is a significant amount of money, and that's what they've wasted. She addressed that and the fact that this government is running pell-mell down the highway, to use that metaphor, of privatization. They want to privatize as much as possible. It's very, very clear.

Number two: The Chair of the Cabinet who spoke about the Rae government—of course, he is their uncle now. He's not our uncle, Bob Rae. I remember Peter Kormos, the member from Welland, said very eloquently, "We hope that Bob Rae does for the Liberal Party federally what he did for the provincial NDP." And guess what? He did. We'll just leave that as it is.

The Chair of the Cabinet talked about the Rae government. The reality was that even with Bob Rae as its head, the Rae government brought in 16 private members' bills of the opposition in a majority government. How many private members' bills has the Liberal government brought in from the opposition? Zero, as a majority government. That's how seriously they take suggestions from the opposition.

When we get to committee, I can tell you—I'm asking, actually: Will they actually bring in any amendments brought forward by the opposition? There's a challenge, because their tradition has been to bring in no amendments from the opposition. So let's hope for a change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, I'd like to repeat again, in terms of this bill, about private members' bills—everybody has their own reality, but there are four private members' bills incorporated into this bill. So I just find the rhetoric here really unsubstantiated—four private members' bills that the opposition wanted are in here. We're saying, "Get it done. Make our roads safer."

This is the most comprehensive attempt to deal with cycling safety in modern Ontario history. No party—Liberal, Conservative or NDP—ever dealt with this comprehensive approach to cycling safety. Some of the cycling safety measures come from the opposition. We're

saying, "Here, we're doing it for you," and they say, "No, it comes from the government; we don't want it."

The reality is that this is not about ideological agendas. This is about road safety. It's about safety for motorists, for pedestrians and for cyclists. We have to have a culture change in this province and get rid of this conflict between road users.

I heard one member of the NDP talking about cyclists and all the awful things they do. That rant about cyclists doesn't get us anywhere. I think we're all guilty of not taking safety into account, whether we're a pedestrian when we cross the road, whether we're a cyclist and we don't obey the rules, or whether we're a motorist. Motorists break the rules; they actually speed. God forbid. Motorists speed in this province, and motorists drive when they're distracted. That is a very key safety component of this legislation.

So we're saying, "Here's your own medicine you prescribed. Why are you against it? Let's get it done. Let's make our roads safe and stop talking. Let's do something."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank those who made comments: the minister without portfolio and the members from York–Simcoe, Parkdale–High Park and Eglinton–Lawrence.

It's not about any piece of legislation being perfect. It's true that there are some private members' bills that are incorporated into this piece of legislation, but there are some gaps in it. As has been the tradition, which has been already pointed out, when we get to committee those gaps are not addressed even though we have raised them and even though we have stakeholders.

As the minister without portfolio has mentioned, the CAA has been a long-standing advocate around cycling safety. I was part of the all-party caucus on cycling safety with the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. Some—not all—really good ideas are incorporated in this.

This is the issue with the way that legislation is crafted in this place. Why not create and craft legislation right the first time? There's criticism of us standing up in this House and raising these issues. Quite honestly, democracy can be inconvenient, but this process can make legislation stronger. I'm sorry that it's so inconvenient for some people in this House.

Bringing up the history and the changed culture of this place—it's true that not too many people have been here as long as the minister without portfolio, but when I was speaking with some of the PC caucus members—they used to travel bills. They used to be truly consultative. They used to actually take pieces of legislation to the people up north, into the east, into the west and into rural communities. While it was inconvenient, who's to say that that wasn't a very good process?

It's hard not to be cynical in this environment when you have three OPP investigations ongoing—

Mr. Steve Clark: Four.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Four. I stand corrected: four OPP investigations.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I didn't think I'd get a chance to speak this afternoon. I'm sure there might have been a few here who wished that was true, but I'm going to get my speech in.

I have heard no one today—and I was out for a little while from this afternoon's proceedings—talking about issues to do with trucks in this bill and some of the rules that they want to place with trucks.

Until last November, I held a valid trucker's licence. I had an AZ licence. I've had that licence since 1978, when they first brought them in. I drove part-time most of the time. When I needed a bit of extra cash for the farm, I'd go out and do some trucking. Mostly it was in the livestock business that I had my experience with trucks, although I drove trains and hauled grains, soybeans and stuff like that—mostly agriculture commodities and fertilizer. So that's what my trucking experience was.

I might add that if you see a livestock trailer—and we call them pots most times because they had the pot-belly down, and they're hauling cattle—I would suggest that you don't park beside them at a stoplight. There is a reason for that. You'll see these pots have holes in them, to let ventilation go through for the animals. If they decide to relieve themselves, it generally comes out of those holes. I've had occasion to see them deposit what they have gotten rid of on top of cars at different stoplights. It's actually quite amusing when it happens to me, but certainly not to the vehicle that is being dirtied; we'll put it that way.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You learn something new every day.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You learn something new every day.

Anyway, one of the issues to do with this that I see here is it says the bill will require the driver of a motor vehicle—which includes a truck—passing a bicycle to maintain a distance of at least one metre between the vehicle and the bicycle. I suppose that's a good idea. But if a truck is just one metre away, I would suggest that bicycle may get sucked into that truck. There is quite a bit of turbulence along the side of a truck as they're going along, and you'll see it especially with the snowy weather we've had. You can see these little tornadoes at the back of the truck.

I would suggest that it may be a good idea that truckers especially need to take extra care when they're passing bicycles, because they will suck them right under these trailers. If they're going at speed, certainly they only have to be a metre away, and that's what this says. So I think there's an issue with that.

One of the other things I found in this piece of legislation is that it says, "Currently ... the act allows certain prescribed combinations of vehicles to have a maximum length of 25 metres. This is amended to allow a max-

imum length of 27.5 metres." That's interesting because when you look at the back of the bill, it says, "Extended length of B-trains."

I don't know whether everybody here knows what a B-train is. It's certainly something that I've had experience with. A B-train is two trailers, and if you look at them, the one trailer sits on a wheel here and the front trailer sits on this wheel—

Mr. Arthur Potts: An articulated—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Pardon me? So you may know what a B-train is. What I'm saying is it only affects B-trains.

I don't understand that because there are two other types of trains. There are A-trains and C-trains. The B-train is in the middle.

You will still see A-trains being driven down the highway; not so much C-trains because they're kind of obsolete, although you do see them once in a while. But the B-trains and A-trains seem to be the most common. So why does this not affect an A-train? The trailers are very similar in length. Why is it affecting B-trains?

I asked the question to the member from Cambridge, who happens to be the transportation minister's right-hand person.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Parliamentary assistant. That's the word. Thank you, sir.

Certainly I wasn't expecting an answer from her, unless she knew it right away, and I'm certain she's going to find that out for me.

But if you're reading this legislation, all it says is we're going to lengthen the B-train combinations. The OTA is advocating for an extension of B-train trailer combinations to accommodate more comfortable sleeping berths for drivers. Most of the trucks I drove had sleeping berths on them; some were nicer than others. But I still don't understand why it only affects B-trains. It's not explained in this legislation. Certainly it is nice to have a big sleeper on these trucks. In some of the sleepers that I had, the width of the bed is the size of a good—

Interjection: You're skinny.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Pardon me? Yes, I'm skinny.

They were the size of a good single bed. Some were bigger than that. In fact, some of the more extravagant ones would tip down and you'd get a queen-size bed to fold down, and they were nice.

But the issue I have with this, Speaker—and again, I hope they're able to explain this because I don't understand what's going on here. The more you lengthen these sleepers out, the more you have to extend your frame because you still have to keep the back of the sleeper ahead of the trailer you're pulling in order to turn. You just can't lengthen a sleeper out; you're going to hit that trailer. Many new owners of fifth-wheel trailers pulling along a pickup truck have found out just how they can crush the back of a truck in when they turn too short.

Again, I get back to the A-trains, which is a different system. Why aren't they affecting that? Because you

lengthen a truck out for a B-train, it doesn't mean that's all he's going to be pulling. He may have to unhook that tractor and go under another set of trains or another trailer. If the distances aren't correct, if the pin location isn't correct on the other trailers, he may have an issue turning.

Like I say, I'm sure the Ontario Trucking Association has figured that out, but when you read this, it doesn't say that. It just says that anything having to do with the B-train, we're going to let them lengthen the tractor's frame so that they can put more comfortable sleeping berths in for drivers.

Some of those sleepers, if you've ever been in them, would have a chest of drawers. They've got microwaves and televisions. You could stay there for a long time. In fact, sometimes when I had been driving for a few days, that was what I would do because they're comfortable and they're very nice to stay in. As you may be aware, a trucker can only drive so many hours a day and so many hours a week.

Another thing it says is that, at the same time, we are looking at extending trailer combinations. We must also address the potential impact resulting from transports inappropriately travelling on our rural and local roadways because these roads have not been built to withstand the weights some of these vehicles have.

Speaker, in these B-trains you could gross about 64,000 kilograms. That's your gross weight. That's heavy. That's really heavy. Now, if you're hauling grain out of a farm that's on country back roads, those roads were not built to handle 64,000 kilos of gross weight. I think most truckers try to be very careful with that. They try to get some of the grain out to waiting trailers that are out on the highway.

I think that's an issue that I've heard from municipalities since I've been here, and even when I was a councillor for the municipality of North Perth: These weights that are being allowed with these trucks are getting just too much for our infrastructure in rural Ontario. I would suggest that's something that has to be looked at.

To me, the trucking issue here has more questions than answers to it. Like I say, I do hope the member from Cambridge can find me some answers because, to me, it doesn't make a lot of sense and I hope that what she brings back will help me out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment / Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Winter road maintenance	
Mr. Norm Miller	2256
Ice yachting championships	
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2256
Family skating event	
Ms. Daiene Vernile	2256

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2015, Bill 67, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2015 pour porter un toast à l'Ontario, projet de loi 67, M. Smith	
First reading agreed to	2256
Mr. Todd Smith	2257
Municipal Elections Amendment Act (Voting Hours Extension), 2015, Bill 68, Mr. Berardinetti / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur les élections municipales (prolongation des heures de scrutin), projet de loi 68, M. Berardinetti	
First reading agreed to	2257
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	2257

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. James J. Bradley	2257
Motion agreed to	2257

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Winter road maintenance	
Mr. Norm Miller	2257
First responders	
Ms. Jennifer K. French	2257
Credit unions	
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2258
Health care	
Mr. Bill Walker	2258
Employment standards	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2258
Distracted driving	
Ms. Soo Wong	2258
Off-road vehicles	
Mr. Steve Clark	2259
Hospital parking fees	
Miss Monique Taylor	2259

Hispanic Heritage Month

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2259
Alzheimer's disease	
Mr. Bill Walker	2259
Office of the Ombudsman	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2260
Water fluoridation	
Ms. Daiene Vernile	2260
Taxation	
Mr. Toby Barrett	2260

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer), 2015, Bill 31, Mr. Del Duca / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le transport (accroître la sécurité routière en Ontario), projet de loi 31, M. Del Duca	
Mr. Toby Barrett	2261
Miss Monique Taylor	2262
Hon. Liz Sandals	2262
Mr. Bill Walker	2262
Ms. Jennifer K. French	2263
Mr. Toby Barrett	2263
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2263
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	2265
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2265
Miss Monique Taylor	2265
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	2266
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2266
Mr. Steve Clark	2266
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2268
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2268
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2268
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2269
Mr. Steve Clark	2269
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2269
Hon. James J. Bradley	2270
Mr. Robert Bailey	2271
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2271
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2271
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2272
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2272
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2274
Mr. Mike Colle	2274
Mr. Bill Walker	2274
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2275
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2275

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2275
Mr. Bob Delaney	2277
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2277
Mr. Paul Miller	2277
Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	2278
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2278
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2278
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2280
Mr. Granville Anderson.....	2281
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2281
Ms. Catherine Fife	2281
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2282
Mr. Paul Miller	2282
Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	2284
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2284
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2284
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	2285
Mr. Paul Miller	2285
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2285
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2287
Mr. John Fraser.....	2287
Mr. Robert Bailey	2287
Ms. Catherine Fife	2288
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2288
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2288
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	2290
Mr. Randy Hillier	2290
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2290
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	2290
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2291
Mr. Randy Hillier	2291
Mr. Paul Miller	2292
Mme Marie-France Lalonde	2293
Mr. Steve Clark.....	2293
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2293
Mr. Randy Hillier	2293
Ms. Catherine Fife	2294
Hon. James J. Bradley	2295
Mrs. Julia Munro	2295
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2296
Mr. Mike Colle	2296
Ms. Catherine Fife	2296
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2297
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	2298

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 23 February 2015 / Lundi 23 février 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Todd Smith.....	2243
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	2243
Hon. David Zimmer.....	2243
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	2243
Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	2243
Mr. Randy Hillier.....	2243
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	2243
Mr. Norm Miller.....	2243
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	2243
Hon. Charles Sousa.....	2243
Mr. Yvan Baker.....	2243
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2243

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	2243
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2243

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark.....	2244
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2244

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2245
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2245

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2246
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2246

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. John Yakabuski.....	2247
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2247

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	2247
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	2247
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	2248

Pension plans

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	2248
Hon. Mitzie Hunter.....	2248

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	2249
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	2249

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2244
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2244

Employment practices

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	2244
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	2255

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Randy Hillier.....	2255
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	2255

By-election in Sudbury

Mme France Gélinas.....	2255
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	2255

Aboriginal economic development

Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	2255
Hon. David Zimmer.....	2255

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	2255
Hon. Yasir Naqvi.....	2255

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. John Vanthof.....	2255
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	2255

Immigrants

Ms. Daiene Vernile.....	2255
Hon. Michael Chan.....	2255

Visitors

Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2254
------------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Leo Jordan

Mr. Randy Hillier.....	2254
------------------------	------

Heritage conservation

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	2254
-------------------------	------

Community Recognition Awards

Mr. Yvan Baker.....	2254
---------------------	------

Off-road vehicles

Mr. Michael Harris.....	2255
-------------------------	------

By-election in Sudbury

Mme France Gélinas.....	2255
-------------------------	------

Elijah Marsh

Mr. Mike Colle.....	2255
---------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover



No. 47

N° 47

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 24 February 2015

Mardi 24 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 24 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 24 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.

Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélatrice à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated this issue the member from Perth–Wellington completed his statements. We are now into the rotation of questions and comments. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'll be joining the debate later on, so I'll give you a preview of some of the comments I'll be sharing with you.

One of the areas I want to talk about is how important a cycling strategy is for the province and how glad I am to see the fact that we have a number of additions to this bill, issues that we've raised as the NDP and issues that we think will certainly increase and encourage cycling in our province.

I also think it's important to recognize that we certainly do want to keep our roads safe. This is something that is really not a partisan issue; everyone wants to ensure that our roads are safe so that we can prevent injuries and prevent needless deaths as well. But connected to that, we also have to talk about the fact that, given that our roads are so safe and given our work to make them safer, it's troubling that we're paying some of the highest insurance rates in the entire country. This is a troubling trend.

I also want to spend some time talking about some of the mistakes the government has made and the fact that

the government hasn't learned from those mistakes. When it comes to the privatization of testing centres, we know very well that there are significant problems with that system. Serco has proven to have an utter lack of accountability when it comes to the proper testing. We've seen that with commercial vehicles and we know this is no surprise.

When you outsource, the primary concern of outsourcing is that it lacks accountability. It makes it more difficult for the government to provide the oversight necessary to ensure that whatever the system is, whatever the outsourced service is, it's being done in a meaningful and a proper and appropriate way.

Now, making a mistake is one thing. Not correcting it is another and then making the exact same type of mistake is even worse. The government is now embarking upon another vehicle inspection centre program which seems to be along that same line.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Hon. Mario Sergio: We are dealing with Bill 31. If my memory serves me well, during the debate in this House we had something like 65 members speaking on this bill already—65 members. We had 13 hours of debate. We all believe that we understand the importance of moving the bill ahead for the purpose that the bill wants to do. So I think it's time that we move on, Speaker, and we get the bill to a vote in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: While I hear the minister responsible for seniors wants to just shut this down and get it over with, we still have members who would like to speak to the bill. It's an important bill in their communities. There are a lot of changes that are taking place in this bill, and I'm supporting the bill. I believe there are a lot of positive changes in this bill, such as the increased penalties for texting or inappropriate use of communication devices or distracted driving. I think that's a hugely important issue, and I spoke to this earlier in the House. The POA fines is an issue that I think is very, very important to our municipal partners—and our municipal partners are down at OGRA/ROMA this week.

You know, what is sad about the House, when it comes to OGRA/ROMA—and it's a very important conference for me, as a member from rural Ontario—is that in years gone past, this House would be recessed so that we as MPPs could spend that time with our municipal partners down at the conference. Unfortunately, this government has decided to sit during the OGRA/ROMA conference. Yet—and I think it's a great idea—we

recessed the House so that we could travel to the International Plowing Match to wave at folks from a float and then enjoy a couple of speeches. But we still sit during OGRA/ROMA.

I put it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, if you really believe that our relationship with our municipal partners is the strongest intergovernmental relationship in this country—which I believe it is—then why don't you recess this House so that we can be down there spending our time with our municipal partners, assisting them on their issues and working with them on the things that we can collaborate on? Would that not make more sense?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Nickel Belt for further questions and comments.

M^{re} France Gélinas: I am very interested in the bill that we are debating right now. The short name of the bill is Making Ontario's Roads Safer. There are a number of ways to make roads safer that are included in the bill, but some of the ways that northerners want to see change to make our roads safer in northern Ontario are not included in the bill, and this is very troublesome to me.

I represent one of those big northern ridings. We have roads, just like everybody else, but they're not in as good shape as the roads that you find everywhere else, if you look at the city of Greater Sudbury and the number of kilometres of road that they have to maintain. As well, if you look at the big users of those roads in Nickel Belt, the representatives for Nickel Belt—we have a lot of nickel mines in Nickel Belt. All of the mines are in my riding. In order to bring the ore to the smelter, to the crusher, it's all being done by trucks. Those trucks are heavy; they take a toll on our roads, and our infrastructure is in need of upgrades. As well, as you all know, this is wintertime. In the winter, they need winter maintenance.

All of those things would make our roads so much safer—making sure that they are maintained in a way that keeps them safe. Last week I had an opportunity to read a number of letters that I received from my constituents about one chunk of road between Chelmsford and Cartier, but there are many other provincial roads that are in dire need of upgrade, and that would make them safer.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for questions and comments has expired. We go back to the member for Perth–Wellington for his final comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to thank the minister for seniors, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments.

Speaker, I don't know whether you were here yesterday and listened to what I was talking about, but I mostly talked about the trucking industry. The reason I did that was because I was a little bit mixed up as to what we were trying to accomplish here. As I said in my comments, the OTA, which is the Ontario Trucking Association, has advocated for the extension of B-train combinations "to accommodate more comfortable sleeper berths," and that's fine; I agree with that. But there are more types of trains than B-trains.

So my question is this: If you take that tractor, which is the power unit in front of your trailer, and put it on another trailer, like a long, 53-foot van or an A-train, which is another kind of trailer, is that going to make it legal? Is it going to make it illegal? That's not addressed in this bill.

I think also, in my comments yesterday, I informed the House that I had had a trucking licence since 1978, and just gave it up last year. That's how long I had an AZ trucking licence. My experience with driving was that I drove these units, but most of my experience is with livestock.

I'd just like to give the Speaker a little bit of advice, if you'll indulge me. You've seen these livestock trailers going along the highway. One of the worst things you can do is park beside one at a stoplight, because every once in a while one of the animals has to relieve itself, and it will come out of the holes and sometimes deposit itself on top of your car. So I would suggest that when you see these trailers you might want to stay away from them until the light turns green and away you go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Perth–Wellington and also remind the member that references to whether someone may or may not be in this Legislature are actually not parliamentary, in my opinion.

Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm going to share my thoughts on Bill 31. I want to begin just by prefacing that I'm certainly in agreement with the bill in general. There are some serious areas, though, that I'd like to draw the attention of the Legislature to, which are troubling, and I'm hoping that we can flesh out those issues so that the issues are laid out before us before we go into committee. So I think it's very important for us to discuss these issues, to raise them, to make sure they're very clear and that we know where we're headed when we go into committee.

In general, the bill is certainly a step forward, and it does improve a number of areas which were much needed. I must acknowledge that before I begin. But there are certain areas that definitely need attention, and we need to highlight those areas that are problematic.

Let me begin generally with the areas that are supportable, that have no issue whatsoever. We've already acknowledged, in terms of the Legislature, but with evidence we know that distracted driving is increasingly the primary cause of accidents and, in some cases, death in our province. Legislation to ensure that we address that is of paramount concern when it comes to road safety.

A number of independent organizations have said that distracted driving now is as much as, if not more so, a contributor to serious injuries on the road. This distracted driving particularly includes hand-held devices, smart phones, texting and driving. So increasing the penalties around that certainly is an important step to ensure that distracted driving is addressed.

The second issue, though, is that I think it's important for us to really work on a more robust education program

around that. I think there's not enough people who know that distracted driving now is competing with drunk driving or impaired driving, in terms of one of the leading causes for folks who get injured on the road. If people knew that, I think it would certainly discourage people from texting and driving, or discourage people from using their smart phones or other devices that would distract them while they're driving. I think if more people knew the facts around that, if more people knew that it's literally the leading cause of injuries, I think people would be more likely to stop that behaviour. I think that's something that we need to really work on.

In addition to these sanctions, there needs to be an education component, and the bill doesn't have that focus on an education component to ensure people know that it's a serious issue.

The drugged driving provisions are, of course, something that we support. It's well-established, and MADD has done some great work around this. We know there is absolutely no excuse to being inebriated, impaired, by alcohol or by drugs and being behind the wheel. That's absolutely unacceptable. We need to make that message loud and clear, and I think it's very loud and clear. This bill strengthens that message.

The cycling provisions are very important and it's an area that I personally am very attached to, as an avid cyclist. I use my bike to get around when I'm downtown, even in these temperatures. Yesterday, I biked to the ROMA—

M^{me} France Gélinas: I saw him so it's true.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My colleague from Nickel Belt saw me bicycling. I think the wind chill was approaching minus 30, and I was cycling from Queen's Park to Union.

The point being that it's a great way to get around; it's fun. Even in cold weather, it's still fun. I had a nice Canadian-made jacket on—union-made, I might add.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What kind?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Canada Goose, actually. It was a Canada Goose jacket.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They're expensive.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's sometimes worth it when you support local industries, Canadian industries. I'm a firm believer in that whenever I can.

The other area that I think is important to notice in terms of the provisions is, we have a cycling provision; we have a number of areas that are important. We need to make cycling not only safer, but we need to encourage it, to encourage people to get on the road and cycle. One of the first obstacles to cycling is that people feel that it's not safe. People are concerned that if they get on the road—they see other cars, they see the situation that they have to get into, and they're like, "I don't want to even try to cycle downtown. It seems too dangerous. It seems too hectic. I won't do it." The more we can encourage safety, the more we can make it a safer practice, the more likely it is that people will get on their bicycles and start to cycle. We need to create that environment.

I think these steps that we've taken are good steps, particularly, where it's practicable, the one-metre provi-

sion when overtaking a cyclist; it's important. We need to do more around that. We need to do more around encouraging people to cycle. It's one of those things that not only improves gridlock; it also takes people out of their cars, it encourages quicker flow of traffic, and it also addresses health. It also addresses the fact that, as a society, we're seeing more and more illnesses that are preventable, and they could be prevented by something as simple as exercise. If we encourage cycling, we're addressing not only an issue that would deal with, perhaps, some area of traffic gridlock and moving around the city, but it also addresses health, and that's wonderful when we have something you can address too.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Environment.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In addition, as my colleague from London—Fanshawe points out—and it's absolutely true—it would also address the environment. Getting people out of cars where it's possible, particularly in urban centres, would then create less pollution, which is a great initiative.

Those are some of the good points. I've pointed out some of the areas where we can improve.

But there are certain areas which are very troubling, and I want to highlight them. When it comes to the 407—I want to make this really clear, and people have talked about this; this is very troubling. Currently, the way the 407 is set up, it's legislated that there is an obligation to consult the public before rates are increased, before tolls are increased. There is that legislated component that requires the 407 to consult with the public before we see our tolls go up. That is being removed by this bill. That in no way makes our roads safer.

We've talked about creative titles to bills. Much of the bill does improve road safety, and that's true. But I don't see how including a provision to remove the obligation to consult the public when raising tolls has anything to do with road safety.

While I agree with the primary components of this bill, I certainly don't agree with that. I know my constituents are completely upset about the fact that they pay so much already in tolls on the 407, and to see that one element of a little bit of fairness in the consultation process even being removed.

We know this government has had a number of problems when it comes to proper consultation. We can look back to the siting of the gas plants and the lack of proper consultation there. We can look to current examples of a lack of consultation like the fact that parents are upset in this province about the curriculum. Many of them are simply upset because they weren't consulted. That could have been easily addressed. There could have been an easy consultation process that made sure it was inclusive and made sure it was broad to address the fact that people are upset. Let's hear their concerns.

0920

Why is it that the government hasn't learned from open consultations? It's a simple solution. We've seen the government make this mistake time and time again. Why not just create, in all circumstances—where possible—an

open and inclusive consultation process? When it comes to the gas plants, you didn't do it properly there. When it comes to this curriculum, you could avoid problems and you could avoid issues when people are involved in the decision-making. In this situation you're removing the right to consult.

This is another example, again, of the direction that the government is taking. Why not just allow for consultation? It's something that doesn't hurt the government. In fact, it always assists the government when we allow people to have their voice heard. It makes them feel vested; it makes them feel appreciated. It's something as simple as that.

At the end of the day, the government will make the decision. If we disagree with it, as opposition we might oppose it. We might raise issues and we might raise concerns. But at the minimum the government should always consult. The fact that in this bill they're removing that right is simply unacceptable.

In addition, there's a track record where the government makes a mistake, doesn't correct the mistake, then makes an additional mistake of the exact same type, and that's when it comes to the outsourcing and privatization of a service model; for example, the driver licensing system. The fact that it's been outsourced to Serco has raised a number of concerns. We've seen report after report outlining serious flaws with the commercial licensing issues around the fact that the outsourcing doesn't allow for proper government oversight and you have licenses that are given out in ways and in circumstances that are questionable. There is a question around the quality of the education and the quality of the testing, and we have drivers that perhaps are not as well-trained as they could be.

Now in addition to the outsourcing of Serco, we have a motor vehicle inspection centre which is also going to be outsourced, which will also have that same set of problems where there won't be proper oversight of the system, there won't be proper accountability. You've made a mistake in the past, you haven't learned from it, and you're making it again. Thank you very much, Speaker. That wraps up my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course I rise in support of Bill 31. The bill has now been debated for over 13 hours. Over 65 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. Listening to the debate, it's clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill. Of course, why would they not be? There are important outcomes, such as controlling the issue around impaired driving, both from drugs and alcohol; the issue of distracted driving; medically unfit drivers; truck, vehicle and bus safety; pedestrian safety; cyclist safety; the collection of defaulted Provincial Offences Act fines; and of course the important issue of Highway 407 East.

Listening to the debate, I feel that opposition members are basically trying to stall. There's no reason whatsoever

that we shouldn't move this important piece of legislation forward so we can debate the many other bills that are of great importance to the people of Ontario.

I urge all members to consider that the debate has been very successful. We've heard a lot of good ideas. Now it's important to bring these ideas to the appropriate forum and move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It seems to be the modus operandi of the government ministers this morning—the Minister of Community and Social Services is on the same refrain as the minister responsible for seniors was earlier. They have their marching orders, of course, and they would never dare to deviate from them. Perhaps they should have had some marching orders when it came to offering inducements to Andrew Olivier up in Sudbury, but I digress.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Or Laurie Scott.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, my goodness, the Minister without Portfolio is the minister without argument when it comes to his trying to make a connection between the past and the present when it comes to corruption. I wasn't going to go on with this, Mr. Speaker, but the minister seems to want to make that the subject.

When you talk about the situation up in Sudbury, all of these other things that the ministers are talking about never necessitated a report from the Chief Electoral Officer, never resulted in an OPP investigation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would remind the member of the bill that we are debating, and I would ask that your two-minute commentary—your comments on the debate would be reflective of what the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has, in fact, spoken to. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. Maybe you should have cautioned the minister.

I will speak about the government issue on this bill. Maybe if they want to get this bill through—because we support the bill—why doesn't their House leader have a conversation with our House leader, instead of springing it late last night by cover of OGRA/ROMA and darkness, and changing the agenda this morning? If their House leader would speak to our House leader and say, "Let's sit down and talk about how we can work something out on this bill," perhaps that might be a better way to the end.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my honour to join the debate and comment on what the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has shared with us. I find it interesting that one of his finishing comments was about consultation and having people have their voice heard, and that was immediately followed by the Minister of Community and Social Services saying, "We don't want to hear you anymore."

In fact, yesterday the same thing happened. My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh shared a very sad story

about a young lady who was killed on one of our highways, and that was immediately followed by the government side saying, "Sit down and be quiet. We don't want to hear you anymore." That seems to be the theme from that side of the room.

The minister also mentioned distracted driving and medically unfit driving. As the Speaker is well aware, in the riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, they are looking at the potential closure of the obstetrics unit in their rural hospital. What that would mean is that expectant parents from that area would then face a long drive down a highway into my riding in order to receive treatment.

We're talking about a woman who is in duress. She's in labour, and her birth partner is now travelling a highway—nerves and trying to get a hold of loved ones to let them know where they're going—and they are now distracted. So we're putting them in a potentially dangerous situation by closing the obstetrics unit in Leamington.

So I would ask that perhaps the members on the other side, rather than trying to shut down debate would do what it is they have said that they were going to do, which was give everybody an opportunity to speak and be heard. Again, historically, through this debate, that's not what they have tried to do. I think, as the member from Windsor-Tecumseh pointed out yesterday, after speaking about the death of a young lady and being told, basically, to sit down and be quiet, the treatment from the other side is incredibly disrespectful to the members on this side and the people who have elected us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to join the debate today in support of Bill 31. If the opposition members care very much about what is happening on our roads and the safety of our roads—it's all very sad to hear about constituents who have been killed—the best way to get to these people is to speed up the passage of this bill and have it included in the law.

I was reading that, according to recent statistics, 40% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. More than that, 14% are repeat offenders, so something has to be done about it. We had so many people speaking about it, and it's all very nice to hear about different stories, but it seems like everybody is supporting it. So why don't we speed up the passage of Bill 31, instead of continuing to put speakers up.

Again, listening to the debate, it has been very clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill, and that the signal—again, those tow truck drivers came to me and I had this item added to the bill: "Slow down, move over." This proposal extends the "Slow down, move over" law to tow trucks that are stopped on the roadside with their amber lights flashing. It is not the case right now. Let's approve this bill and protect these truck drivers.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for a final two-minute wrap-up.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank everyone who joined in the debate; thank you for your thoughts and your concerns. This is a bill that we will certainly assist in moving forward. There are a certain number of areas that we need to address and improve upon. In general, we need to make our roads safer, and we all agree on that. When it comes to the way we make our roads safer, we need to really focus on the education piece as well.

When it comes to cycling safety, I think it's so important to reiterate that the more we make our roads safer for cyclists, the more people will cycle, and that will have an impact in terms of improving health, improving gridlock and also improving and assisting the environment.

The area that I want to focus on in my last minute or so is the 407. I'm very troubled with respect to the changes and why this was included in this bill, particularly when it comes to the removal of the notice. That was something that was just an assistance, that assisted constituents in my riding. It also helped people in the province of Ontario to make sure they were on top of their bills. The fact that the notification is being removed is unacceptable. In addition, the fact that the legislated consultation process that involved the public is being removed is unacceptable. The government has to learn from the fact that it's not doing enough when it comes to consultation.

I tabled a question yesterday talking about this issue of consultation, and I asked the Minister of Education, "Will the Minister of Education organize a more informative and accessible consultation process regarding the proposed changes to the health education curriculum, so that parents have an opportunity to review the changes and have their voices heard." It's as simple as hearing the voices of the community and hearing their concerns. That's often all it takes to ensure that there is more fairness, there is more accessibility in terms of the laws, and this government simply doesn't understand that idea. You need to hear the voices and concerns of the people of this province. That's who we represent, and it's so important that we do whatever we can to encourage that and not discourage it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Bill 31, as I think members of the House know, not only serves to protect drivers on our roads; it also in fact introduces a number of provisions that will help keep pedestrians and cyclists safe in Ontario. I think that's different from bills which strictly deal with automobiles and trucks, for instance.

For the last 13 years, Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety. I was very intrigued by that when I was the Minister of Transportation. This has been, as I say, for the last 13 years. This isn't something new; it goes past which governments have been in power, and it speaks well of this Legislature and the governments that have been here.

Our government is proud of our record of having among the safest roads in North America, as I'm sure all members of the Legislature are. But we know there's

always more that we can do to improve our road safety programs. That's what this bill endeavours to do. As always, keeping our roads safe is the highest priority of, I think, any government, and certainly our government.

The road safety issues that Bill 31 aims to address continue to be persistent challenges in all of Ontario. According to recent statistics, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. That's quite an appalling statistic. Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, also deals with drinking-and-driving fatalities, which represent nearly one quarter of all fatalities in 2011. From 2008 to 2012, an average of 14% of convicted alcohol-impaired drivers were repeat offenders. If current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may actually exceed those from drinking and driving by 2016. Who would have predicted that a dozen years ago?

In 2011, pedestrians constituted approximately one in five motor-vehicle-related fatalities, and it's always very sad when that happens. Bill 31 will help our government address some of these challenges and improve road safety.

Just to provide some context on how we got to this point in time: This bill happens to be a combination of two government bills that were introduced in the last Parliament but died on the order paper when the opposition forced an election in May. The two previous bills were called Bill 34 and Bill 189, and both bills saw significant debate in the last session. For Bill 34, during second reading debate, 13 MPPs from all parties spoke to the bill for over three hours. For Bill 173, during second reading debate, nine separate MPPs from all parties debated the bill for over two hours.

Further, this bill incorporates four previous private members' bills from all three parties:

—Bill 116, sponsored by the government member from Scarborough—Rouge River, relating to increasing fines and applying demerit points for distracted driving;

—Bill 137, sponsored by my friend the official opposition member from Parry Sound—Muskoka, relating to constructing cycling paths on King's highways;

—Bill 38, sponsored by the official opposition member from Simcoe North, relating to increased safety for roadside emergency vehicles;

—Bill 74, sponsored by the third party member from Parkdale—High Park, relating to cycling safety and passing.

In the current Parliament that we're in now, the bill has seen almost 14 hours of debate, and according to my count, we've had some 68 MPPs from all parties speak to the bill. That's actually quite unusual unless there's a filibuster going on, and I don't think there is in this particular case.

Listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of this House supports the bill. Sometimes there are contentious bills where there's a significant division taking place. We've had supportive comments from people from all parties, and I've enjoyed hearing from the various members who have spoken to the House. There has been a good cross-section, urban and rural. We've had people from the north, the south, the east and

the west; people with specific issues they wish to see addressed, and I've been pleased to see this in this debate. I think it has been a fulsome debate in that regard.

It's time that this bill is put to a vote for second reading and, hopefully, referred to committee where the real work takes place. We know that many of the provisions in this bill could actually affect something happening very soon, and so we want to ensure that the implementation is as quick as possible, although we want to go through second reading, of course, which we are at the present time.

Getting to committee—I think the great advantage of committee that I've seen in my experience in this House is people and organizations tend to make representations on the bill.

Some specifics: Members of the government and opposition have an opportunity to put forward amendments to the legislation, and I think that opportunity is very good.

You won't believe this, but there have been previous governments, of course, that didn't even allow some bills to go to committee. I'm trying to remember whether the social contract ever went to committee or not; I don't think it did. Someone will correct me if I'm wrong in that regard.

Certainly, the party right across from us was well known for not wanting fulsome debate on a lot of issues.

There has been fulsome debate on this, and I think it has been valuable debate. I don't want to downgrade it at all; I think it has been very, very helpful to all of us.

In committee, members of all parties will hear from all stakeholders who have an interest in that bill, and I think that's good.

In committee, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to strengthen the bill or to change and alter it in some way. I think that's very positive.

At the same time, the House can move on to debate substantive matters. There are other matters coming before the House, some which are more contentious, by the way, than this, where there's disagreement.

There are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced which the government would like to debate and see go through the legislative process:

—Bill 6, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act;

—Bill 9, Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act;

—Bill 37, Invasive Species Act;

—Bill 40, Agriculture Insurance Act;

—Bill 45, Making Healthier Choices Act;

—Bill 49, Ontario Immigration Act;

—Bill 52, Protection of Public Participation Act; and

—Bill 56, Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

0940

Mr. Speaker, we'd like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but of course that's not possible if we continue simply to debate this bill on and on and on, even though we've had, as I say, some excellent speeches made by members from all parts of the House who have brought different points of view—even though there is general agreement—and have identified what they think

could be areas of improvement. I think that's been very good.

Now I have to make reference to my good friend from Renfrew–Pembroke who—he got distracted a bit, I know, and you allowed him to wander a bit, but you called him back into the realm where he should be. I was wondering why he mentioned ROMA, for instance; why we didn't hear any questions yesterday about the issues that you would hear at ROMA. None of the opposition members asked those questions.

Interjection: I did.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Now, over here we did, but we didn't really have those kinds of issues coming forward. They were busy with other things happening. So I'm going to be listening carefully in question period today to determine whether we're going to get questions that the people at ROMA are asking many of the MPPs who are gathering there.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, we could debate this bill forever. We could go on and on, even though we've heard from all the members I've mentioned, and had all that debate time. But I think we have to also deal with other pieces of legislation. As a result, Mr. Speaker, I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Given the duration of the debate to this point and the number of members who have been able to participate, I'm going to allow the motion.

Mr. Bradley has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I deem the motion carried.

Mr. Del Duca has moved second reading of Bill 31, An Act to amend Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

As a result, this motion will be deferred until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this bill was last before the House, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had completed his remarks.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Bill 40 I'm sure is an act that is very dear to the Speaker, given that he comes from an incredibly rich agricultural area in this province, Chatham-Kent, which is known for an incredible production of soy beans and many, many other products that feed the whole province, if not the country.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that farmers request is some kind of stability, because of the precarious nature of the agricultural industry given weather, variable markets etc. I think I heard just recently that the number one cash crop in Ontario is now soybeans. It has overtaken corn, in my understanding. This is a relatively new product that is very, very popular with consumers all over Ontario and all over Canada.

But this Bill 40, what it does is cover losses and yield reductions caused by insured perils. Producers can choose the type and level of coverage that best meets their needs. It gives them a choice in terms of what kind of coverage they can get. In Ontario, production insurance is delivered by Agricorp, a crown agency of the province of Ontario. In 2013, there were more than 14,000 customers, representing five million acres and \$2.9 billion in liabilities insured under the production insurance program. This present insurance program covers grains and oilseeds.

Just to let you know, Mr. Speaker, everyone wants to speak on this. I was negligent in not mentioning that. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Kingston and the Islands, the minister responsible for seniors and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. They all want to share in the discussion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, that's what it is. You communist, you.

Mr. Mike Colle: At heart, I'm really a socialist.

It covers tree fruits and grapes, which are very, very susceptible to changes in weather etc., processing vegetables, fresh market vegetables, specialty crops and forage. I'm not too sure what forage is; maybe one of the other members could follow up with that. This bill basically enhances production crop insurance. It is also in partnership with the federal government, and it's something that is offered all over the world for farmers.

This act will develop a new production insurance plan, with the following pieces that will occur: Operationally, it will develop a plan including working with stakeholders; third-party certification by an actuary—you know, just checking on it; federal participation ensuring compliance with national regulations, and it will be approved by the Treasury Board; and regulatory changes—the approval of minister's regulations, adding the product to the list of eligible agricultural products.

This is something that will be of great importance to our agricultural community, it will be of great relevance to hard-working people in rural Ontario who depend on agriculture for their livelihood and it is an incredibly important part of ensuring that there is stability in the agricultural sector.

Those of us who live in cities sometimes don't pay enough attention to where our food comes from and the amount of work that it takes to plant, grow, harvest and bring food products, agricultural products, to market. The average city person goes to the corner store, Loblaw's, No Frills or whatever—Whole Foods if they've got money—and they buy it off the shelf. They pick up their fresh products, and you hope that when people—one of my pet peeves has always been when people buy imported food products when they can get tastier, safer Ontario agricultural products.

It's just incredible to see that people will choose tomatoes from Mexico when we have year-round tomatoes grown in Ontario, whether they're grown in the world's tomato capital—I know the member from Beaches—East York understands the importance of Leamington, the tomato capital of the world. The best tomatoes grown anywhere in the world are in Leamington. So when you go buy tomatoes at your T&T grocery store in Toronto, ask for Leamington tomatoes. By asking for and eating Leamington tomatoes, you're not only ensuring that you're getting safe Ontario products, but you're keeping the tomato farmers and growers in Leamington working. That's why when you shop for food products, you are supporting local farmers and the local agricultural industry. This is critically important not just to buy the cheap-est thing, but to buy something that is made in Ontario.

0950

An example I always use—Mr. Speaker, you know it very well—is garlic. I see people going into the local grocery store, and they are buying garlic from China because it's cheap. You can get, I think, four of those garlic buds for 99 cents. But they don't know where that garlic came from. Was there contamination in that soil in China? Were there any safeguards where that garlic was grown? No, but they say, "Oh, it's just garlic. I'm just buying the cheap Chinese garlic." That is a mistake, because, first of all, if you really appreciate good food, you will appreciate the value in the Ontario product, and you will buy the garlic grown here in Ontario. It may be a little bit more expensive, but how much garlic are you going to use that you're going to have to buy the cheap 99-cent garlic? Buy the garlic grown locally, it tastes better. It's real garlic. It's not bleached. People say, "Well, that's a little example. Big deal." No, it's symbolic of us who consume food products to think of the Ontario product. They taste better.

Ontario corn—you know, Mr. Speaker, when you get that local Ontario corn, it tastes like honey; it's so sweet. You don't have to put butter or salt or anything on it; it's wonderful corn that we grow here in Ontario.

Whether it's tomatoes, corn, soy or another product which is really growing in importance in Ontario is

lentils. We are one of North America's largest producers of lentils. People say, "Well, it's a lentil." Lentils are a staple of many, many diets now. Lentils are everywhere. There is a whole agricultural industry that is now involved in providing lentils for the Ontario consumer.

So this bill essentially gives protection to Ontario farmers—a bit more insurance stability. It's a good bill that connects this Legislature with the hard-working people who are just looking for a bit of insurance as they undertake their important work growing our food.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm passing the baton over to the member from the great agricultural area of Kingston and the Islands, where they grow—what do they grow there? I don't know. Can you tell us what they grow locally in Kingston and the Islands?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence for his words.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today in this House in support of Bill 40, because I know that the amazing farmers in my riding of Kingston and the Islands and the rural regions surrounding my riding will benefit from this bill.

I believe that Ontario must work with agri-food producers to better manage risk through an expansion in the scope of production insurance. In helping producers deal with potentially devastating natural events beyond their control, they will be better equipped to innovate, adapt and grow the sector.

It is hard to deny that extreme weather conditions have become part of the new norm. Ice storms, early frosts, late frosts, severe flooding, extended droughts, destructive winds, microbursts and other events have caused millions of dollars in damage and with ever-increasing frequency, it would seem.

As the farmers in Kingston and the Islands know—and all farmers, in fact, as well as climate scientists—long-term weather effects are rarely straightforward and predictable. Warmer, longer growing seasons can be advantageous in some sectors like soy, corn, grapes, forages and horticultural crops. Potential increases in productivity, however, are all too easily offset by unpredictable negative scenarios. For example, the trend for warmer winters is already encouraging the spread of damaging invasive species, especially insect pests and fungal diseases. Longer, hotter summers lower the natural immunity of livestock, while extreme weather events and flooding can increase the spread of infectious disease.

In 60 years, average annual temperatures in Ontario have increased by 1.4 degrees Celsius, and by 2050 we are looking at a 2.5- to 3.7-degree increase. This will increase evaporation rates enough to cause more extended droughts in the future. While overall precipitation rates are not expected to change much, more intense rain is predicted, and we are now all too familiar with microbursts and their sometimes devastating effects. As a matter of fact, in my home in Kingston and the Islands, which we've had in the family for roughly 60 years, we had a flash flood a few years ago for the first time. Our

basement, in one hour, filled up with three inches of rain. And while I could fully appreciate the anguish of our farmers as the heavens poured and the water rose, I did not have an entire year's worth of crops to worry about. I'm pleased that the Ontario government is working towards mitigation and adaption measures that reduce the magnitude of climate change and our vulnerability to it.

The threat of invasive species is another significant consideration. They compete with native species for food and habitat, they cost the Ontario economy tens of millions of dollars each year and put jobs in fisheries, forestry, agriculture and tourism at risk. Our recently introduced legislation on invasive species will work well with Bill 40.

A third risk for the agri-food sector is the highly volatile and unpredictable nature of worldwide agricultural commodity markets, usually in response to positive or negative climactic changes everywhere.

In short, Bill 40 expands the scope of production insurance to help farmers cope with yield losses due to weather, pests and disease, and it will apply to more agricultural commodities. Currently, Ontario's inability to offer insurance for commodities beyond crops and perennials puts pressure on the province to respond with ad hoc compensation when producers without production insurance experience significant loss or shortfall. We've seen these ad hoc programs cost the province millions of dollars in a single year, and they are much more costly than production insurance. Furthermore, producers can choose the type and level of coverage to meet their needs. Premiums are designed to be affordable and cost-shared between producers and the federal and provincial governments, encouraging best practices. Production insurance covers crop losses based on specific weather perils and is designed and delivered like insurance.

Approval of this legislation will align the province with the rest of Canada. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and PEI all have bee mortality plans. Manitoba is planning on introducing a pilot plan for hog mortality insurance. Beyond our borders, most developed countries already offer subsidized production insurance. Ontario's agricultural sector is a major economic driver with huge potential.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we all know that farmers in the agri-food industry are actually extremely good at adapting to change. They always have been. But I think all of us can agree that we need solid, dependable risk management programs that mitigate for factors beyond their control and expand the scope of crop insurance.

We need to support farmers to do what they do best: innovate, create jobs and feed people. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetich.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Kingston and the Islands. I now recognize the minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Wow. Speaker, thank you so much for the five minutes or so. We don't get too many chances to speak in the House. It is such a wonderful opportunity to have, to say a few words, especially on Bill 40.

Ontario, I have to say, with the support of Bill 40, is much committed to providing support and help to the agri-food partners in their management of risk—especially this particular week as we welcome to Toronto OGRA and ROMA people from throughout Ontario. They have reminded us of the role they play in the province of Ontario as the agricultural people who bring food to our homes and our stores.

1000

How is the Ontario agricultural sector doing? I have to say that we know, but listening to the people yesterday, it is vibrant and very strong, and they need all the support they can get from their government.

In 2013 alone, Ontario generated some \$12.1 billion in farm cash receipts, or about 22% of Canada's total farm cash receipts. This is an increase of some \$2 billion compared to 2008 farm cash receipts. However, as you know, Speaker—you come from one of the areas that is so wonderful. My colleague here says that the San Marzano tomatoes are the best ones to make spaghetti sauce with. Indeed, you come from the particular area of our province where they produce the best tomatoes. Given the increase, we have to admit that the market is very volatile. It fluctuates. That is why it's so important that the government has in place a good, strong program of assistance when our producers, our farmers, have difficulties.

This would give us the ability to offer production insurance to more agricultural commodities, and it's important in helping producers manage the multitude of risks that they face every day. I think it's the responsibility of the government. I think every member of the House would agree that it's the right thing to do.

Production insurance is currently available for almost 90 commercially grown crops, which include grains and oilseeds, tree fruits and grapes, processing vegetables, fresh market vegetables, specialty crops and forage—and it's not limited to those. As we see, and I don't have the time to go into the various details, it includes livestock, beekeepers—bees, if you will, Speaker—because everything is important to the agri-food that we produce in Ontario.

Are we the only ones? No, we are not the only ones. We are not the first, I have to say, regrettably, but all other provinces have the authority to offer production insurance plans for agricultural products beyond crops and perennial plants as well. So it's got very wide coverage when it comes to helping farmers in Ontario. Provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Quebec and PEI also have bee mortality plans in place, while Manitoba is planning to introduce a pilot plan for hog mortality insurance in the near future. Anything we can do to really assist our producers would go a long way in helping ourselves.

We heard yesterday from a young lady about an innovative way of producing more, better and cheaper crops in Ontario. We have to listen, Speaker, because we have to encourage our young people as well. As we age—and I don't have to tell you, Speaker; I'll probably

be speaking later on about how we are aging—it's important that we provide these necessities, this help to our young people.

Farming is wonderful. I come from a farm home, if you will, back in my other life and I know how wonderful it is. I think that we have to support Bill 40 to make the amendments and provide the necessary insurance coverage for our farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The member from Kawartha—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Brock. That's okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We can't forget Brock because it's also a fine agricultural community.

Today I'm pleased to rise to make comments on the members from—let me see—Eglinton-Lawrence, Kingston and the Islands and the minister for seniors' affairs. That's quite a few people, in the 20-minute timeline that they had, who wanted to speak on the bill today, which is the Agriculture Insurance Act. It's about expanding the scope of what's covered for crop insurance. There's been a lot of talk in the news about neonicotinoids that most of the farm groups, especially the grains and oilseeds sector, are concerned about. We want regulations based on science, so we want to make sure the government takes its time and makes sure that we have proper regulations and legislation that go along and help our farmers, protect our farmers and protect the environment. We're asking for very good science before final decisions are made on that matter.

There was a lot of mention about garlic farming from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence. I can say you could buy lots of garlic from my area of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. In fact, Haliburton itself is a great growing area, and that's part of the Canadian Shield. It's pretty remarkable that that can happen, but there are a lot of great garlic farmers out there. I want to give them a shout-out.

With the crop insurance, I think what we heard a lot, especially in the last election, was that the program that exists now—they don't want changes to the programs as in less things taken away from the programs that exist now for crop insurance. They want a dedicated fund, so that the monies they're paying in now were to be in a dedicated fund for insurance, whereas now it just goes into general revenue.

There's much more to be said on this bill, and I do believe I will have an opportunity later in the week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to stand and speak on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe on Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

Now, in London-Fanshawe, in the London area, there's not a lot of farmers and agriculture, but in the surrounding area it's huge. It's a huge industry that we have.

Strathroy, Stratford, St. Marys—there's lots of farming, so it's extremely important that we support our farmers with the Crop Insurance Act because we know that if we don't have food sustaining us we're going to be in a situation where we're going to have a crisis on our hands.

Making sure that our farmers have the right kind of insurance so that they can thrive—I was talking to my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton about how weather can affect crop insurance. It can be devastating to a farmer and a family.

I was with the bee farmers of Ontario recently. They had their AGM out in Toronto. I spoke to a few bee farmers. I talked to them about when they had that outbreak, the mad-cow disease, and how devastating that was for that industry.

Farming is a staple in our Canadian society and we appreciate all that farmers do, bringing food to our tables, to our communities and to our farmers' markets. That's a wonderful initiative we have in London: The Western Fair has a farmers' market. And we want to support our local farmers. Part of that is also helping them to have the right crop insurance at the right time, so that when there is a need for them to recover those losses they have access and security to an insurance policy.

It's good that we are looking at making those things better because we have to support our farmers in our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a pleasure to speak on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture on Bill 40, this very important act. What is really gratifying so far about this debate from my colleagues, the members from Eglinton-Lawrence, Kingston and the Islands and the minister for seniors, is that you're getting representation from three urban members who speak quite eloquently of the importance and the belief that we have on how important the farming community is in Ontario. All three members had a chance to show that they care about farmers in rural communities, that they care about the agricultural products that we eat, and want very much to make sure moving forward, that Ontario has the tools necessary to assist our farmers in making sure that they can prosper.

1010

What this act, of course, does is it expands protections on the insurance act to livestock from what was before just crop insurance. That's why we're renaming this act the Agricultural Products Insurance Act: so that we can move away from all oilseeds and crops and corn and all those other 90 or so items that are currently covered and also include livestock which are in peril from diseases and pests etc.

Most significantly, we've heard a lot about bees and the neonics situation. It's very, very important that we can find an insurance instrument to move away from ad hoc programs in order to protect the bee farmers of Ontario. Likewise, we have the same situation with hog farmers; we have the same situation with fowl, with birds and such. It's so important that we go forward this way.

As the PA to agriculture, I'm often asked: Why would the Premier make an urban member PA in agriculture? You know that we all have a very specialized expertise in a very narrow segment of the agri-food value chain in that we are consumers. It's so important that we keep the consumer perspective, because consumers from large cities who enrich farmers, as farmers feed cities—it's so important that we keep the consumer's perspective in mind as we move forward. This act helps.

I'm glad to see my urban members supporting it, and the member from London–Fanshawe as well. This is an important bill for Ontario, and we appreciate all your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning on Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act, and deliver some comments on the insurance act. It is needed.

I come from a very, very rural and agricultural riding: Prince Edward–Hastings. Prince Edward county is now very well known for its wineries and that emerging industry in that area. There are some concerns that this legislation will address—the fact that this season alone there was what they refer to in that industry as a short crop because there was the long winter last year. I know we're all saying this winter is going on way too long, as well, although it was a shorter start, of course. There was severe damage to the wine crop, which would be, of course, the grapes. That makes an insurance product like this an absolute necessity. Hastings county is very well known for its beef—and Prince Edward, as well, for its beef and chicken farmers.

Any time we can ensure a bit more stability in our agriculture sector, I think that's a good thing. Our caucus will be supporting this bill as well.

But one of the things that's happening in the Ministry of Agriculture right now is this swift move on the neonicotinoids issue. It's a huge concern for farmers and producers in my area because it's not science-based. What it's going to do is create a lot more loss when it comes to their harvest time. They're not going to bring in as much because there's going to be a lot more rot. There's going to be a lot more loss of product, which is going to cost them money, which is going to drive up the cost of an insurance program like this as well.

I think what we need to do is make sure the decisions we're making when it comes to neonics—neonicotinoids—are fact-based, science-based, and not rush into anything that's going to be very damaging to our agriculture sector. There's a balance there, and we have to find that balance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for his final comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank all the members who spoke: Kingston and the Islands, the minister responsible for seniors, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, London–

Fanshawe, Beaches–East York and Prince Edward–Hastings. They spoke about the importance of this bill.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this bill is premium-based. Basically, the farmers pay a portion of the premiums, and then the federal and provincial governments also kick in money. It is a partnership to provide greater certainty and insurance for this very volatile industry, the agriculture industry.

In my opening remarks, I talked about lentils and garlic and tomatoes and everything, but also, as someone mentioned here—London–Fanshawe and, I think, Prince Edward–Hastings—is the importance of appreciating Ontario beef. People talk about Alberta beef. Well, Ontario beef is just as good or better. So ask for Ontario beef when you get that steak. Or pork—there is no better pork in the world than Ontario pork. So when you go to the grocery store, make sure you ask for Ontario pork. There's no better pork in the world—tasty, safe Ontario pork.

Then there are other products which are very good in Ontario that not enough of us promote—Ontario lamb. Forget the New Zealand lamb. It's old, it's shipped, it doesn't have the aroma. Buy local Ontario lamb. Ontario goat: You want a nice treat that's different from your usual? Try a little bit of local Ontario goat.

Again, we're trying to help our farmers with this very practical, pragmatic insurance program so that we can enjoy these safe, tasty, delicious Ontario products that keep us fed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is 10:15, the time for debate this morning has now expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We will recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, Jim Wilson, I would like to introduce two councillors from New Tecumseth: Michael Beattie and Paul Whiteside. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of myself, I have two councillors from Leeds–Grenville in the crowd. I'd like to introduce Jason Barlow, a councillor with the township of Elizabethtown–Kitley, and David LeSueur, a councillor with the city of Brockville. Welcome to Queen's Park, gentlemen.

Hon. Michael Chan: It is really my great pleasure to introduce the people's mayor from the great city of Markham, Mayor Frank Scarpitti. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's with great pleasure that I'm able to introduce to the House today Mayor Margaret Quirk of Georgina and Mayor Virginia Hackson of East Gwillimbury. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House, sitting in the east members' gallery, the president of York University, Dr. Shoukri, and also

the president of Seneca College, David Agnew. I want to thank them and welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome some guests on behalf of my colleague the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. We have Paul Ens, who is the warden of Elgin county and mayor of Bayham, and his wife, Mary Lee Ens, who is here as well; Councillor Tom Southwick from the municipality of Bayham and his wife, Eva Southwick; and the mayor of Dutton Dunwich, Cameron McWilliam, joining us in the Legislature here today.

I'd also like to welcome some municipal councillors from Prince Edward—Hastings. Veteran councillor from Stirling—Rawdon Jeremy Solmes is here, and a new councillor in Stirling—Rawdon, Dean Graff, and his lovely wife, Donna, are here as well. Welcome to Queen's Park, folks.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to welcome to the House today Wayne Emmerson, regional chair and CEO of York region, along with Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, town of Aurora, and town of Newmarket mayor Tony Van Bynen, accompanied by Lina Bigioni, director of government relations for York region. Welcome all.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Niko Hoogeveen from Barrie: his mother, Dr. Kelly Emerson Hoogeveen; sister Nell Hoogeveen; grandmother Ann Hoogeveen; grandfather Harry Hoogeveen; aunt Dini Wagemans; and cousin Ingrid Wagemans. Welcome. He's doing a great job.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome the newly elected mayor of the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, in the great region of York, Justin Altmann.

Mr. Michael Harris: Quickly, I'd like to welcome the folks here with CNIB today. I encourage everyone to attend their reception later on today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Minister of Education. Would the minister please remind this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjection: Order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, that's my job, although I appreciate the team effort. I am going to ask that the decorum be where it should be. It's a serious question. Thank you.

Go ahead.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Would the minister please inform this House of the number of parents who currently have children in publicly funded Ontario elementary schools, and how many of these parents, last November, actually completed the online survey commissioned by

your ministry regarding changes to the health and physical education curriculum?

Hon. Liz Sandals: This has been a really interesting situation, Speaker, because yesterday we had the interim leader and the PC education critic, the official spokespeople on the issue, saying that they actually welcomed our new health and physical education curriculum. And then we have the three leadership candidates, who seem to be totally in a different land.

Interjection: Answer the question.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, I think you'd better see what people have been saying.

This is one of the leadership exchanges. The member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex said, "I've committed to stopping the sex ed agenda in its tracks. Christine ... I need you to join with me at caucus to stand up to Kathleen Wynne to stop the sex ed agenda once and for all." That's what he said. And—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, obviously there's no answer there—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I believe I just asked for decorum, and I expect it to be maintained.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're making a joke out of this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'll take care of this.

Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Minister, there are millions of parents in Ontario, and you refuse to hear from over 99% of them—not quite a consultative process.

This House should be reminded that on October 30, this minister said that even these opinions of these very few parents would likely not affect the content of her planned 2015 sex ed curriculum.

Minister, now that you have released this proposed curriculum, it is clear that thousands of parents have concerns. What are your plans for a true consultative process now that Ontario mums and dads are able to see for themselves what you have planned for their children?

Hon. Liz Sandals: And now the rest of the story that you're all waiting for: The member from Whitby—Oshawa said in reply, "I've been very clear on my position on that, Monte. I stand with you.... there's no question I stand in the same place that you do. Parents are the ones that should be deciding about sex ed and what their children should or shouldn't be taught.... There's no question I am against what they're doing."

As we speak, I presume Patrick Brown is outside.

It's troubling that all three leadership candidates for the Progressive Conservative Party are in disagreement with the current caucus leadership and want to bury a new sex ed curriculum, a new health and physical education curriculum that will protect the health and safety of our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Speaker, back to the minister: In recent days, the only concession you've been willing to make to concerned parents—that is, to those parents who do not share your view of how their children should be raised—has been to point out that the Education Act gives parents the right to withdraw their child from particular lessons; in other words, Minister, a highly selective opt-out.

Minister, are you prepared to extend this opt-out principle to local schools? For example, if a local school council votes to opt out of your new sex ed curriculum, would you honour this request of a school council?

Hon. Liz Sandals: And I assume if he was Premier you could vote to opt out of teaching about evolution, too.

Actually—
Interjections.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I hope the press gallery heard what the member, Mr. Nicholls, said: that opting out of evolution would actually be a good idea for the Ontario curriculum. I happen to disagree, as somebody who has a science background.

Let's talk about parents. Let's talk seriously, because we actually think that parents should be involved in the conversation. That's why we're creating materials for parents, so that parents can talk to their children about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1040

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My second question is to the Premier. Premier, last year you tried to dodge the record of the McGuintry era by distancing yourself from Dalton's team. These weren't your people—"Nothing to do with me," you said—but in recent weeks some of your people have found themselves in hot water. The Sudbury by-election has resulted in your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, and one of your Liberal fundraisers, Gerry Loughheed Jr., having allegedly broken anti-bribery laws. The matter is now being referred to federal prosecutors and other police.

Premier, can you confirm for this House that you personally hired Pat Sorbara as your deputy chief of staff, and that you appointed Gerry Loughheed Jr. to serve as chair of the local police board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered questions about the Sudbury by-election situation many times. I will say again that, yes, Pat Sorbara is a member of my staff. The police services board in Sudbury makes its own decisions. The fact is that I had decided by the end of November that Glenn Thibeault was the person who we wanted to have as our candidate in Sudbury, and there were subsequent conversations about keeping the past candidate involved.

But it's interesting that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex doesn't want to talk about the fact that there is a protest going on outside about a sex ed curricu-

lum that is going to protect children in this province, in every one of our publicly funded schools in Ontario. He doesn't want to talk about that, because he knows, I think, in his heart that it is the right thing to do. We need to update that curriculum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Again to the Premier: I'm certain the hard-working officers of the OPP are doing their best as they continue this and all of the investigations into your office. I'm certain they'll find all the evidence they can, but with Ms. Sorbara and Mr. Loughheed Jr. still working in Liberal offices and a Premier who insists she believes that they did nothing wrong, how can the people of Ontario be sure that your office won't double-delete any evidence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have answered the questions. I have said that we are going to co-operate with the authorities. Of course we will co-operate with the authorities. I have been very clear all along that the decision had been made. I had decided by the end of November that Glenn Thibeault was the person who we wanted to have—who I wanted to have—as our candidate in Sudbury. The conversations that happened subsequently were about keeping the past candidate involved.

But you know, I heard the member from St. Catharines talking about the ROMA conference. There are people who are here today meeting in downtown Toronto to talk about issues that I would have thought would have been very important to the member for Lambton-Kent, because the issues around investments in infrastructure—the Ontario Good Roads Association members are very concerned about those investments in all of the communities around the province. That's the work that we are focused on doing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Premier, it doesn't end there: Ornge, gas plants, deleted hard drives, the Sudbury by-election, and a prominent member of your own 2013 transition team—your former Deputy Minister of Education—has now admitted to three criminal charges.

Premier, in light of the criminal conduct of your own hand-picked advisers, how would you rate the ethical deficiencies of your government compared, say, to the scandals that drove your predecessor out of office: a higher standard of ethics than we got under Dalton McGuintry or, perhaps, just as bad?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, that was a pretty broad-ranging question. Let me just quote back to the member something that he said yesterday. He said that it's not the Premier of Ontario's job, "especially Kathleen Wynne," to tell parents what is age-appropriate for their children. Mr. Speaker, let me just ask the member opposite: What is it that especially disqualifies me for the job that I'm doing? Is it that I'm a woman? Is it that I'm a mother? Is it that I have a master's of education? Is it that I was a school council chair? Is it that I was the Minister of Education? What is it exactly that the mem-

ber opposite thinks disqualifies me from doing the job that I'm doing? What is that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Order. I'm still hoping that my request for decorum is maintained.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for Premier. On December 12, Pat Sorbara said on tape to Andrew Olivier, "You've been asked directly by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to allow Glenn to have the opportunity to have, you know, basically, the opportunity uncontested."

Is that true?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, I have answered these questions many, many times. I had decided by the end of November that Glenn Thibeault was the person who I wanted to have as our candidate in Sudbury. It was clear to me that he was going to be a strong voice for Sudbury and that he was the best candidate for us in that by-election. The conversations that took place were about keeping the past candidate involved.

Would it have been great if the past candidate had wanted to work with us and had wanted to stay as part of the team? Absolutely. That would have been terrific. But the conversations that were had with the past candidate were about keeping him involved. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are many ways of being involved in the political life of a party beyond being a candidate, and that's what those conversations were about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On December 11, Gerry Lougheed said on tape to Andrew Olivier, "The Premier up to now has always said to me she's in favour of a nomination race. So I want to make that really clear, she's never said to me, 'I want to appoint him.'"

Is that true?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I made a statement last Friday, and I talked about the way candidates become candidates in general elections or by-elections. I said my preference is for nomination races. I had been through a nomination race in the 1990s that was a very difficult experience. I think that when it's possible to have a local nomination race, that's a good thing to do.

But in those circumstances where that's not possible, where that's not going to happen, and where a decision has been made according to the constitution of the party, as was the case in the Sudbury by-election, then I think the honest thing to do is to make it clear that that decision has been made, that a candidate has been chosen, rather than a situation like in Scarborough-Guildwood, with Adam Giambrone, where it wasn't clear at all. It wasn't a real nomination race, and it had to be controlled from the centre.

I don't think that's the way it should be done. I think we should be up front about what's going on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On December 20, according to the police transcript, Detective Constable Erin Thomas asked Mr. Olivier, "Okay, and so from that conversation, were you still unsure as to whether they might appoint somebody or whether they were gonna go through with the open nomination?"

Andrew Olivier said, "That's what Pat had stated."

Is that true?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will say again that by the end of November, I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury.

The conversations that took place were about keeping the past candidate involved. That's why those conversations took place. It's why I had a conversation with Andrew Olivier, and I suggested some ways he might be involved. But I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that she told Andrew Olivier she would appoint her candidate, but on December 20, Detective Constable Erin Thomas asked—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Mr. Mike Colle: What about Giambrone?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): What about quiet?

Interjection.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't appreciate somebody counselling to make more noise.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On December 20, Detective Constable Erin Thomas asked Mr. Olivier, "So after you'd spoken with Pat Sorbara on the phone, at that time did you know whether or not there would be an open nomination, whether there would be other people participating in it?" And Andrew Olivier said, "No."

If the Premier claims she was so clear, why did Andrew Olivier at that time think that no decision had yet been made?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had a conversation with Andrew Olivier before the conversation that he had with Pat Sorbara. I made it clear to him that I had decided that Glenn Thibeault was going to be the candidate. The fact is that the conversations that took place after that were about keeping the young man involved in the party. That is exactly what happened, and I had made the decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate by the end of November.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier claims that she decided to appoint Glenn Thibeault in November. She didn't alert the media, and she didn't tell me or the interim leader of the PCs. I get that. I get that 100%. But she apparently didn't tell her campaign director/deputy

chief of staff, she didn't tell her Liberal kingmaker in the local community, and she didn't tell Andrew Olivier. All the evidence and all the tapes show that the Premier's office was offering Andrew Olivier a job so that the Premier's candidate could have his nomination uncontested. The Premier says that never happened. All the evidence says that the Premier's version is not true.

Is the Premier's story a little bit hard to believe, Speaker? I think so. Does the Premier have any evidence whatsoever to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is exactly right. When I made the decision, after meeting with Glenn Thibeault in my home, that he was the best person to be the candidate, much as I have a deep respect for the media, I didn't go to the media that day. There was a process that needed to unfold. Glenn Thibeault was actually changing the party that he was going to be affiliated with; that was a difficult decision for him to make. He needed to work with his family and make sure that all of those pieces were in place.

I had made the decision by the end of November. There were conversations to try to keep a young man, who obviously would be going through a difficult transition—it's a difficult thing when the leader decides that a different person is going to be the candidate than the past candidate. That was a difficult thing and we wanted to keep him involved. That's why those conversations took place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality remains that there's a mountain of evidence showing that Andrew Olivier was offered a job so the Premier wouldn't have to appoint her hand-picked candidate. There are police interviews and call recordings that any member of the public can hear.

So my question remains: Does the Premier have any evidence at all to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite and a number of the members have asked this same question in 16, 20, 25 different ways, but I'm going to answer it in exactly the same way. The fact is that I made a decision by the end of November that Glenn Thibeault was the best candidate for us in the Sudbury by-election. The conversations that took place after that were about keeping the past candidate involved. That's the reality; that's what those conversations were about. And we have in Glenn Thibeault a strong voice for Sudbury.

I believe that I was right in the assessment that Glenn Thibeault is the best representative that Sudbury could have at this moment. We are very happy to have him in our caucus and we know that he's going to be working very hard for the people of Sudbury.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. When the Lieutenant Governor read the speech from the throne he told us that your government "will put evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship."

Premier, your government is doing neither. As the evidence mounts against you, your deputy chief of staff, and your Liberal operative, you have resorted to ideological and partisan attacks.

Premier, last Friday, I launched an online petition that calls for you to demonstrate integrity. It requests that you demand the resignation of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed Jr. until the allegations are resolved. When will you demonstrate the integrity that's expected from the office of Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said yesterday, I know the Premier very well. I have seen her wrestle with difficult decisions. I can assure you—it's not just my opinion, but it's the opinion of every person who has ever worked with our Premier—that integrity is the number one characteristic she has.

These attacks on her character are unfounded, and they know it. They know it. This is a woman who makes thoughtful, principle-driven decisions. She wrestles with issues. She thinks hard about what is the right way to go forward.

The members opposite have given her lots of advice on what to do. The judgment of the Premier—what she feels is right, in her heart—is something that I have enormous respect for. This is a woman we are blessed to have leading our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is back to the Premier, Speaker. Premier, you said you'd do politics differently. Your throne speech said that you would be open and transparent but I guess that doesn't mean you'll have open and transparent nominations. The same throne speech said decisions will be "made responsibly, openly and in the best interests of Ontarians."

I don't believe it was responsible and open to have Pat Sorbara offer Andrew Olivier jobs or appointments to step aside. Premier, do you believe it was in the best interests of Ontarians to have your deputy chief of staff allegedly bribe a candidate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I really think that these questions have been asked and asked and asked, and they have been answered consistently and thoughtfully. They're not getting the answers they want, Speaker, but they're getting the right answers.

We have been back six days. We've had 72 questions—that was at the beginning of question period, and I think we're up to 78 questions—and the only questions you're asking, with the remarkable exception of the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex—these are the only questions you're asking.

Why aren't you asking about transit? Why aren't you asking about our economy? Why aren't you asking about jobs? Why aren't you asking about health care? Why aren't you asking about kids with disabilities? Why are you focusing on something that you know is actually under investigation?

The Premier has spoken. It's time you asked real questions.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This question is coming to the Premier, Speaker. The Premier doesn't seem to be taking bribery allegations very seriously, so let's look at what the people outside the Legislature are saying.

I'm going to quote from the Toronto Star: "Premier Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal Party are digging themselves deeper into" a "political mess. Ontarians will rightly be shocked by allegations from Elections Ontario that two party operatives—including her deputy chief of staff—appear to have broken the law. Under these circumstances, both should step aside while" the police investigation is ongoing. That's what the Toronto Star had to say.

Is the Premier prepared to fire Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said earlier, the Premier listens to advice and then she has a conversation with her soul and lands on the right way forward, the principled way forward.

I think it's a bit ironic—or puzzling, maybe I should say—that the members opposite are pretending that they don't look after their past candidates, they don't try to keep their past candidates involved. I think it's a pretty well-established tradition that people actually might—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We do it within the bounds of the law—the bounds of the law.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You were so desperate for something.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, please come to order—and also the Minister of the Environment.

Please carry on.

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many examples of this. Let's go back to 1998 when "veteran MPP Floyd Laughren"—I'm quoting now from the Hamilton Spectator—"the former New Democrat finance minister, is calling it quits to accept a \$120,000-a-year government appointment." Now, who was energy minister at that time? None other than the interim leader of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, a court would never take what is in a person's soul as evidence in any court case. But nonetheless it's not just the Toronto Star. The Toronto Sun's editorial has had this to say: "Sorbara is now the subject of two active, ongoing investigations into"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No extra comments.

Please finish.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: "Sorbara is now the subject of two active, ongoing investigations into the Sudbury by-

election.... How can she possibly continue as Wynne's deputy chief of staff and campaign director?"

Is the Premier going to start listening to the voices outside this Legislature and take responsibility as Premier and do the right thing and ask Pat Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed to step aside?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have a feeling that we just saw history being made, because I don't think the NDP has ever before quoted a Toronto Sun editorial. If they're taking advice from the Toronto Sun, it's a new day in Ontario.

I think it's important to go back to why the Premier would have chosen Glenn Thibeault to be the Liberal Party candidate in the election. Who is this man, Glenn Thibeault? I'm sure the member from Nickel Belt knows quite well that he is a man of enormous integrity. He is a man who has dedicated his life to improving the lives of the most vulnerable people in Sudbury, whether it's his work at the United Way, whether it's his work with Big Brothers Big Sisters, whether it's his coaching team. He has been engaged in helping improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and kids with autism. He is a very fine man, and why wouldn't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors affairs and it's about government programs.

Minister, seniors play an active and important role in our province's communities and economy. In my own riding of Trinity–Spadina we have a considerable and active senior population which continues to impact the community in many positive ways. As we know, there are also various challenges and opportunities associated with growing older, and seniors have a number of distinct needs our province is working to address.

January marks the two-year anniversary of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Recently the minister visited my riding of Trinity–Spadina and celebrated this anniversary and provided an important update on the action plan. This plan is more than a framework; it's a promise to our seniors and their families.

Could the minister please elaborate on Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors and inform the House of the initiatives our government is taking to improve—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister responsible for seniors' affairs.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Indeed, the member from Trinity–Spadina has a good question. He's not only very supportive, but a very dedicated and committed advocate for seniors in his riding and throughout our province.

He's quite right. We are having a very strong shift in our demographics. Ontarians are living longer and we're getting more seniors than ever before. We have a huge shift indeed in our demographic. Presently we have over two million people over the age of 65. We're going to

have 4.2 million in about 20 years. By 2016-17 we are going to have more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 14. Myself, as minister, and the government, have said we have to face the challenges, so we have in place Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors.

The latest one, which the member has mentioned, is the Seniors Community Grant Program. In the first year of operation we reached out to 179 projects—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to thank the minister for the response. It's clear that our government is committed to achieving a higher quality of life for our seniors. I am delighted to say that these specific programs have resonated very well in my riding.

In my riding, a remarkable project at the Harbourfront Community Centre, titled the Urban Grannies Garden Project, received \$10,000 of funding from the Seniors Community Grant Program. This gardening program fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among seniors in Trinity-Spadina, enabling them to partner up with youth while addressing food safety and community collaboration. The youth are delighted to have learned and developed these new skills, and the seniors are more socially engaged.

I was pleased to have the minister join me in my riding to see first-hand the great work this senior group is doing in the riding and how the funding is being put to use. Can the minister provide us with additional information on initiatives our government has created to help improve the lives of seniors in this province?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon. Mario Sergio: The member from Trinity-Spadina did indeed come up with a good question.

We all know that because of the challenges that we are facing with this increasing number of seniors, we had to come up quickly with the Ontario seniors plan, which is a very comprehensive plan incorporating the age-friendly community planning program, the Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program and the community paramedicine program.

We have the Ontario Elderly Persons Centres. Last week, we made some changes by increasing the number of languages in the Finding Your Way program. We now provide the information in Urdu, Arabic, Tagalog and Tamil. This is on top of another 16 languages to the guide to programs and services for seniors.

This is why we want to motivate our seniors. We want to make sure that our seniors are proud to live in Ontario, to grow in Ontario and age in the province of Ontario.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. We all—well, many of us here—know the rules: You don't comment directly on the outcome of an ongoing investigation. Yet, Friday, while impugning and maligning members of this Legislature, the Premier couldn't help herself from noting, with regard to the eventuality of

the charges for her deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, that "On our review of the matter, we don't expect that to happen." Premier, thankfully for the people of Ontario, it is not your expectations we are relying on to determine guilt or innocence.

Premier, were your comments just completely inappropriate or were they, in fact, attempting to influence the outcome of an ongoing investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, my comments on Friday were an expression of my belief that we were dealing with allegations, that there was an investigation ongoing, and based on what I know about the situation, I'm not asking my staff member to step down. That's what I was saying on Friday, and I was being very clear about the fact that we had made a decision about who the candidate was going to be in Sudbury and that there had been no offer of anything in return for an action and that the conversations that had taken place were about trying to keep a young man who had been a candidate involved in the party. That's what the statement on Friday was about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, your orchestrated strategy to change the channel is straight from the old Liberal handbook: how to stop at nothing to hold power. That's why, despite your assurance that you wouldn't drag individuals through the mud, you did exactly that with a drive-by blanket smear maligning our entire caucus. It's also why the member from London North doubled down on your investigation speculation, indicating the allegations are baseless. Premier, an investigation is ongoing. It's not up to you or your deputy to predetermine the outcome.

Premier, you told us you'd be different, yet you're walking on the same scandal-ridden trail of deceit and diversion that followed Mr. McGuinty right out these doors. Is this what we can expect from a Wynne Liberal government, keeping you and your friends in power by buying off seats at any cost?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm listening carefully to all of the questions and answers and I'm not happy with that last part. But I'm not going to ask you to withdraw, other than to just indicate to you it will not be tolerated any further.

Carry on.

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We know there's an investigation going on. We are not playing Perry Mason on this side of the House. The 78 questions, if the Deputy Premier's calculation is right, that have come from the other side are doing just that.

I was making a point on Friday when I stated the fact that there have been members from other parties who have come across to us and have talked to members in this caucus about the fact that they would be willing to step down from their seat in return for an appointment. That is a fact. That has happened. I didn't name names because it wasn't about individuals; it was about the reality that we said no. We said no, we're not going to do

that, even though those approaches had been made. That's the point I was making. I made that point on Friday.

The member opposite has brought it up in a context that makes me repeat what I said, but I was saying it to make a point about the fact that we said no, we were not going to do that.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. It's not just the Toronto Star; it's not just the Toronto Sun. The Ottawa Citizen editorial board wrote this: "Using public appointments to reward loyal service is one thing. Dangling the possibility of appointments while trying to persuade someone to give up their candidacy is quite another." And a column in the Globe and Mail says, "As it turns out, Ms. Wynne is not quite as different from Mr. McGuinty as she appeared."

These quotes are not from question period. Will the Premier start listening?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let's just be clear. I had made a decision by the end of November that Glenn Thibeault was the best person to be our candidate. There was no candidacy. There was no position that the past candidate held.

The reality is that we were working to try to keep this young man involved. He had been our candidate. He was not going to be our candidate again, and we were working to try to keep him involved. He didn't have any position other than as a past candidate. So when I say that there was nothing offered in exchange for an action, that's exactly the case, because he wasn't in a position. He was a past candidate, and I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate, not Andrew Olivier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's not just the Star; it's not just the Sun, the Citizen, the Globe and Mail. There is also the National Post: "One of the incongruities of elected politics is the cynical assumption that laws are made to be observed by others.... Ms. Wynne reflected this attitude in spades Friday." And here's what the Waterloo Record had to say: "Ontario's governing Liberals make the law—but they are not above it.... Premier Kathleen Wynne seemed blind to this fact."

The Premier is not just hearing from the opposition. She's hearing from the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the Ottawa Citizen, the Globe and Mail, the National Post and the Waterloo Record. Everyone but the Premier knows the Liberals are on the wrong side of this issue.

Will the Premier finally do the right thing and admit some responsibility and fire Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I have to say it's getting a bit boring in here, I think. There are important questions facing this province and you're not asking them.

It's very clear that the Premier made a decision that Glenn Thibeault would be our candidate. It's very clear

that our party actually reached out and tried to have a conversation with a past candidate. If you actually listen to the tape, it's abundantly clear that Andrew Olivier knew that he was not going to be the candidate from the very beginning of the conversation with Pat Sorbara.

Gerry Caplan, who is a good New Democrat, said, "Why we're making this the biggest deal in the world is beyond me." Well, I tell you, Speaker, it's beyond me. When there are important issues facing the people of Ontario, why both opposition parties continue to focus on this is beyond me too.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, your ministry is pursuing a mandate of transformation for the services it offers people living with disabilities. This government has clearly chosen to make individuals with developmental disabilities a priority by making the significant investment of \$810 million over three years in the developmental services sector.

Minister, you have said before that this government is working towards having people with disabilities fully included in the fabric of our communities and able to live as independently as possible, like Taylor Abbaspour of Barrie, who now has two jobs and is preparing to move into his own apartment.

Minister, can you please tell the House how your ministry is working towards this goal?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member for Barrie for the question. As the member said, our government is choosing to invest in Ontario's most vulnerable people, and thousands of people are already benefiting from the budget investment.

Last fall, I shared with this House my ministry's launch of the Developmental Services Employment and Modernization Fund. This fund is set to deliver \$15 million over three years, and is part of the \$810-million investment strategy. This fund is intended to support the ongoing transformation of the developmental services system into one that is more person-directed, collaborative and efficient, and that promotes greater inclusion and independence for individuals.

In this first round of funding, that was announced earlier this month, the government is supporting 38 projects around Ontario that were selected as best meeting the objectives of this fund.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
Interjections.

Mr. Han Dong: I can't hear the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did say, "Supplementary."

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. This new employment and modernization fund is a strong example of the way that this government is using the innovative leaders in the developmental services sector to make a tangible difference for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

In my riding of Barrie, Simcoe Community Services is one of the 38 successful proposals of this new fund. This agency, supported by this government, has been doing great work for many years to support individuals in their daily life and seek better integration in their communities and economy. Now, with this additional project funding, CEO Marion Graves says that this agency will be able to expand their pool of prospective employers.

Minister, can you please elaborate on what other ways this fund will improve the lives of people across Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're moving the developmental services sector to a place that better integrates individuals in their community and economy, and transforms the way supports are offered to them.

First, it is clear that those with developmental disabilities are a very diverse group of individuals with varying interests and abilities, so customizing employment initiatives is very important to ensure a successful outcome. This means that agencies need to collaborate more closely to help transition individuals to employment opportunities in the community.

An excellent example of this type of initiative is LiveWorkPlay, in Ottawa, that I visited along with Minister Naqvi last Friday. We want to make municipal community programs more inclusive and develop a provincial centre of excellence on employment.

We are transforming the developmental services sector so that individuals are now living in the community and have every opportunity to work in their community.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services said that your government would not interfere with the removal of Gerry Loughheed Jr. from the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board.

The minister said that under regulation 421/97, Members of Police Services Board—Code of Conduct, it is “up to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission ... to consider whether the code of conduct is being complied with or not.”

That's true. But are you aware that section 25 subsection (1) of the Police Services Act allows your minister to request the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to investigate, inquire into and report on the conduct of a member of the board?

Premier, through your minister: Will you request that independent body to investigate the inappropriate actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr.?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I didn't have the chance to congratulate our member Glenn Thibeault for a wonderful election in Sudbury, so I'm very pleased to. He ran a positive campaign, and the people of Sudbury have spoken and they have elected him.

On the question, Mr. Speaker, all police service board members appointed by the province or a municipal council are subject to the code of conduct under the Police

Services Act. I understand that the Sudbury police services board has addressed this issue recently, and they have voted for Monsieur Loughheed to retain his position. It is important to note that, if a board member has breached the code of conduct, an investigation by the Ontario Civilian Police Commission may be conducted pursuant to section 25 of the PSA.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: The police services board code of conduct, section 14, subsection 1, states, “A board member whose conduct or performance is being investigated or inquired into by the commission under section 25 of the act ... shall decline to exercise his or her duties as a member of the board for the duration of the investigation.” This is not an issue of political interference by the board. We have an open investigation by the OPP and a damning report by the Chief Electoral Officer. It's time for you to request an independent investigation from the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, thus requiring Mr. Loughheed to step away from the board. I'm asking you, Premier and Minister: Will you ask for that investigation to take place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, the Police Services Act does not give the minister the authority to remove a board member. It is important to note that, if a board member has breached the code of conduct, an investigation by the Ontario Civilian Police Commission may be conducted pursuant to section 25 of the public service act. The OCPC would decide if a hearing into the matter is warranted. That's the process. Anybody can report a case to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. If the member wants to do it, it's up to you, sir.

ÉLECTION PARTIELLE À SUDBURY

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est très simple, et elle est pour la première ministre : qui a dit à M. Loughheed et à M^{me} Sorbara d'offrir un emploi à M. Andrew Olivier?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Merci beaucoup pour cette question. Je vais dire encore une fois que j'ai eu une conversation avec Andrew Olivier pour l'engager dans le parti. J'ai décidé que Glenn Thibeault était le meilleur candidat pour notre parti à Sudbury, et je suis très heureuse d'avoir M. Thibeault dans notre parti et notre gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ce n'est pas par coïncidence que M. Loughheed et M^{me} Sorbara ont tous les deux dit à Andrew Olivier qu'ils l'appelaient au nom de la première ministre. Ce n'est pas par coïncidence qu'ils ont tous les deux dit à M. Olivier qu'il pouvait avoir tout ce qu'il voulait en autant qu'il ne se présente pas comme candidat

libéral. Ce n'est pas par coïncidence que ces trois personnes pensaient que la décision de nommer un candidat n'était pas encore prise.

Ma question est simple : qui prend ces décisions de dire à M. Lougheed et à M^{me} Sorbara quoi faire?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: J'ai décidé que Glenn Thibeault était le meilleur candidat pour notre élection à Sudbury. J'ai fait cette décision. J'ai dit que j'ai eu une conversation avec Andrew Olivier pour engager Andrew Olivier dans notre parti parce que je crois que c'est la responsabilité du leader d'un parti.

I have said this over and over again. I made the decision. We were working to engage Andrew Olivier. That's what the conversations between Pat Sorbara and Andrew Olivier were about.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario's biodiversity and natural heritage contribute substantial ecological and economic benefits to our province, yet invasive species threaten our province's biodiversity and can have drastic impacts on our economy.

One species that is already established in Ontario, the zebra mussel, clogs the intake pipes of municipal water supplies and hydroelectric companies, and interferes with the overall enjoyment of our lakes and rivers. Managing zebra mussels costs between \$75 million and \$91 million each year.

Another invasive species, the emerald ash borer, is a beetle that has devastating impacts on Ontario's ash trees. Since 2002, the emerald ash borer has spread across much of southwestern Ontario, Sault Ste. Marie and the Ottawa area. This beetle kills approximately 99% of ash trees as it moves through the area and I understand that over 118 hectares have already been affected.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he explain what our government is doing to stop the spread of these species in Ontario?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Davenport for the question. It's important that in Ontario we be as proactive as we possibly can. In the past, we've been reactive and the member, through her question, has referenced a couple of examples. The zebra mussel is costing us \$90 million a year in terms of trying to deal with it once it has arrived. We know by being proactive we can limit that.

The emerald ash borer is another great example. Here, the city of Toronto has spent \$37 million over the last five years and removed a significant portion of their urban forest canopy. We need to try and be more proactive where we can be on these issues.

There are examples where we've been successful, too. Since the ballast water restrictions and changes have come into place, we don't believe there has been an introduction of another aquatic invasive species into the Great Lakes since 2006, since those changes came into place.

In regard to the emerald ash borer, simply by preheating pallets—they believe the emerald ash borer came in on wooden pallets. Simply by preheating those pallets before they come over, you can deal with it that way. That's one of the reasons we've reintroduced the Invasive Species Act. We want to be proactive on this file and carry this issue forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for his response and leadership on this important issue.

I'm pleased to hear that our government is taking a proactive role in preventing, detecting and rapidly responding to invasive species. However, often environmentalists, landowners, industry, and hunters and anglers of this province have competing interests when it comes to addressing environmental concerns in Ontario. Municipalities are very interested in preventing the spread of invasive species as they are often at the front lines, paying the cost when these species invade our communities.

Though I know you have worked with a number of stakeholders to bring this legislation forward, my constituents are concerned about the impact this legislation will have on everyday Ontarians and industry.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could he please explain to the House what our government is doing to work with stakeholders, communities and municipalities to prevent invasive species from affecting our environment and economy?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Once again I want to thank the member from Davenport for the question.

Last week or the week before, I was in Ottawa for a conference primarily centred on dealing with biodiversity in Canada—Canada-wide. It was a federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting dealing with biodiversity, but a significant part of the conference dealt with the issue related to invasive species.

Ontario is seen as a leader on this file. One of the requests that Ontario brought to the conference was that we establish a federal-provincial task force on a go-forward basis to deal with this in a pan-Canadian approach.

Minister Aglukkaq was there. She was the host and the leader on the conference. Through her leadership, as well as with the support of the other federal, provincial and territorial ministers, we received agreement. We have now established and will establish in very short order a task force dealing specifically with invasive species. This will be to the benefit of all of us across Canada. Of course, invasive species know no boundaries.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Premier. Premier, here's a quote, and I begin, "It is of the utmost importance that we lead responsibly, act with integrity, manage spending wisely and are accountable for every action we take." Can you tell me whose words those are?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I imagine I said that. I'm just thinking that I said that. Certainly, if it's not a quote

from me, it's certainly something that I believe. In fact, it's why on Friday, if we're still talking about the Sudbury by-election, which I imagine we are, I made a clear statement about when I had made the decision and what we were going to do in terms of the ongoing investigation. We were going to co-operate with the authorities and I made it clear what my actions going forward would be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes, Premier, the quote is yours. In fact the quote is found in every mandate letter you wrote to your cabinet ministers. Unfortunately, it seems that the value you place on integrity is dependent on circumstances and is flexible when it suits your needs.

1130

During your latest scandal, did it not occur to you that you were asking Gerry Loughheed to break a police services board code of conduct regulation which states that "Board members shall refrain from engaging in conduct that would discredit or compromise the integrity of the board or the police force"? Why did you put Mr. Loughheed in a position where he would be breaking this code?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This question has been asked many times in many different ways. I've answered the question. I've made it clear that the conversations that took place were in the context of my having decided who the best candidate was going to be for us. That was Glenn Thibeault, and we were trying to work to keep the past candidate involved. That's what the context was.

ÉLECTION PARTIELLE À SUDBURY

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M. Michael Mantha: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Après avoir demandé à M. Andrew Olivier de prendre une décision afin que la première ministre n'ait pas à nommer son candidat vedette, M^{me} Sorbara a dit à M. Olivier : « Tu es seulement la troisième personne à qui elle a dû demander ça. »

Ma question est simple : qui sont les deux autres personnes et quelles sont les offres qui ont été offertes?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je vais dire encore une fois que j'ai fait une décision que Glenn Thibeault était le meilleur candidat pour Sudbury, pour notre parti, et les conversations avec Andrew Olivier étaient des suggestions pour engager notre ancien candidat dans le parti.

I have said repeatedly that the conversations with Andrew Olivier were about suggestions about ways that he could stay involved in the party apart from being a candidate—because he was not going to be the candidate; Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M. Michael Mantha: Encore à la première ministre : M^{me} Pat Sorbara a dit à M. Andrew Olivier : « C'est la troisième fois que la première ministre appelle des gens pour les empêcher de se présenter. »

Encore une fois, ma question est simple : comment s'appellent ces gens? Qui sont-ils?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: J'ai dit que j'ai fait une décision. Je ne sais pas qui est le troisième. Je ne sais pas qui est cette personne. Je sais que Pat Sorbara a eu une conversation avec Andrew Olivier pour engager Andrew dans le parti parce qu'il était notre ancien candidat. C'est la fin, monsieur.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Energy, whom we were able to host, in my riding of Cambridge, in November, talking about energy and the new master servicing agreement that was signed between Bruce Power and Babcock and Wilcox. Thank you for coming.

Minister, it seems that Ontario's electricity system has changed significantly since the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO, and the former Ontario Power Authority were created in 1999 and 2004 respectively. In fact, I believe that the areas of overlap and duplication between the two agencies have been noted since a report from the Agency Review Panel. I understand that the IESO and the former OPA have now merged to form a single entity as of the beginning of this year, in 2015.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please advise the House as to the role and responsibilities of the newly merged Independent Electricity System Operator?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Cambridge for the question.

The newly merged Independent Electricity System Operator is responsible for ensuring that there is enough power to meet the province's electricity needs in real time while planning and securing electricity supply for the future. It does this by:

- balancing the supply of and demand for electricity in Ontario and directing its flow across the province's transmission lines;

- planning for the province's medium- and long-term electricity needs and securing clean sources of supply;

- overseeing the electricity wholesale market; and

- fostering the development of a conservation culture.

A joint working committee reviewed each organization to determine where efficiencies could be found while ensuring that the electricity system remains safe and reliable.

Mr. Speaker, the merger, which took effect January 1, was smooth and seamless, and it is generating very significant efficiencies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister. I think it's helpful for families and businesses in Ontario to know what the new Independent Electricity System Operator does and what it's responsible for.

I'm sure it was a complex process to merge the IESO and the OPA. I find it reassuring to hear of the joint working committee that worked collaboratively to review where efficiencies were being found, to ensure that our electricity system remains safe and reliable for all Ontarians, including those in my riding of Cambridge.

I know that you and the Ministry of Energy staff have been focusing on improving the efficiency in the energy sector and have placed a specific focus on improving efficiency at our energy agencies. While there are obvious efficiencies, such as the reduction from two boards of directors to one and from two CEOs to one, could the minister please advise the House on how else the merger of these two agencies will increase efficiency?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the supplementary question. Our government's priority is to continue building a clean, reliable and cost-effective electricity system for Ontarians, so the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, and the former Ontario Power Authority, OPA, was implemented to increase operational efficiencies and contain costs.

The merger is expected to increase operational efficiency, create synergies and contain costs by bringing short-, medium-, and long-term planning functions together, simplifying the electricity sector for industry and consumers, and coordinating the flow of electricity between generators and consumers. The merger supports our government's commitment to improve agency efficiency, reduce costs in the electricity sector and help mitigate costs for ratepayers.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's very usual that the Speaker announce the visitation of a special guest: Mr. Alvin Curling, in the west public gallery—allow me, for the record, to put down what I normally say—in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments the member for the riding of Scarborough North, and in the 37th and 38th Parliaments for the riding of Scarborough–Rouge River, and in the 38th Parliament our former Speaker.

Thank you very much for being here.

Before we do our vote, I have been requested to ask a few more people. A point of order from the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Sorry. I did not notice that in the gallery are three of my constituents: Paul Robert, Margaret Casey and Janet McDougall. I just wanted to welcome them.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I may have said “public service act” instead of “Police Services Act” when answering the question for the member from Leeds–Grenville. If I said that, I would like to correct myself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A point of order to correct your record is always appropriate.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Liz Sandals: A point of order: I'd like to correct my record too. When I referenced the heckling about how parents should be able to vote on evolution curriculum, I shouldn't have named the individual; I should

have given the riding. I should have said “the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While one is allowed to correct their record—I do accept that as a point of order, but not in the spirit I believe we are supposed to be intending this.

DEFERRED VOTES

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélatrice à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

On November 27, 2014, Mr. Del Duca moved second reading of Bill 31. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Gretzky, Lisa	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Hoggarth, Ann	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Horwath, Andrea	Qaadi, Shafiq
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Sattler, Peggy
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Kiwalda, Sophie	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Smith, Todd
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
DiNovo, Cheri	Marlow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiane
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Fedeli, Victor	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fife, Catherine	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakubski, John

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John

McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
Meilleur, Madeleine

Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 88; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered?

Interjections.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: General government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill go to general government? So ordered.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Can we get a clarification there, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The bill has been referred to the committee for general government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome, member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery are friends of mine from the riding of Brant, who are here for lunch with the MPP in their support for charity, Mr. Ken Mercer and Shari Martin. Welcome and thank you for being here.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome a number of people here today who have come to Queen's Park to celebrate Black History Month. They are Dr. Mohsen, Lawrence Dawkins, Trevor David, Monica Pollard, Dr. Catherine Chandler-Crichlow, Pranavan Ganesh, Gwyneth Chapman, Dr. Rosemary Sadlier and Omar Ha-Redeye. Welcome, and enjoy Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome to our guests. Further introductions?

Mr. Arthur Potts: This gentleman has already been introduced by the minister, but I also want to lend my greetings to Omar Ha-Redeye, who is a constituent and one of the many volunteers who got me here. Thank you and welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Arnella Csongradi from Don Valley East, a personal friend of mine. She's here to celebrate Black History Month.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to introduce Farah Cooper, Richard Lewis, Yinka Adegbusi, Penina Lam and Mr. Lam, Charmaine and Donovan Blair, Raymond Degby and Judith Brown. Thank you very much, and I enjoy welcoming you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to discuss an important topic to Ontario's future, and that is rural health care. During the bear-pit session yesterday at ROMA and Good Roads, we heard a lot from municipalities with regard to the importance of rural health care. But there are two hospitals in my riding that require attention by this government: the South Bruce Grey Health Centre, and specifically their Chesley Restorative Care Unit, as well as the Kincardine hospital.

First, the RCU, the Chesley Restorative Care Unit, is part of a 10-bed approach to help patients regain their independence after acute phases of illness with the expectation that they would be able to return home. The closure of this unit, scheduled for spring, will push patients to remain in hospital for a longer period, until they are discharged or until a bed in a long-term-care facility becomes available. This will end up costing more in the long term, rather than getting patients back home and improving their quality of life. The restorative care unit is a model that should be followed by this government.

Secondly, the Kincardine hospital, and I've spoken about this situation before: In 2008, they were promised dollars by the Liberal government. In August 2011, this community had a carrot dangled in front of them with the promise of a new hospital build. Today, in 2015, nothing has come to fruition. Just today, Kincardine and Huron-Kinloss approached the minister to say, "Please help us. Our hospital is in disrepair."

We need this government to focus on rural health care.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Danah Beaulieu represents the very best my riding of Windsor West has to offer when it comes to building partnerships in our community. She's the owner and founder of Art InDeed, an organization that provides a wide range of holistic-based art programs at her studio and community organizations across town, including the Alzheimer Society of Windsor and Essex County. Alzheimer's, as many in this chamber know, is the most common form of dementia and is both devastating and incurable.

Speaker, I'm proud of the work Art InDeed is doing with the Alzheimer Society of Windsor and Essex County. I recently toured the society and was impressed by the quality of services that are offered, like education

and counselling for people suffering from Alzheimer's and related dementias, along with their families.

Last year alone, the society offered over 3,000 counselling sessions and 110 support group meetings, and distributed over 7,000 information packages, all while self-funding 35% of their annual budget.

With the number of people suffering from dementia expected to double in a generation, I'm thankful for the creative partnering of Art InDeed and the Alzheimer's Society. I think all members in this chamber will agree that we should help foster these relationships as we search for ways to fight and live with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

CHRIS WILLIAMS AND CRAIG MANN

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today in the Legislature and acknowledge some very special Ontario talent that gained international recognition on the world's biggest stage over the weekend.

Like many people throughout the province and country and across the globe, I tuned in to watch the Oscars on Sunday. While some may have been watching the stunning dresses, outstanding music and really inspiring performances, it was really the awards being handed out that drew most people's attention.

I'm pleased to say that our province was very well represented in the winners' circle. You see, director Chris Williams, who was raised in Kitchener and later attended the animation program at Sheridan College in Oakville, took home the Oscar for best animated feature for *Big Hero 6*. Not to be outdone, Craig Mann, born in Oakville, won a best sound mixing Oscar for his work on the film *Whiplash*. Speaker, it's clear that these Oscar victories were both very well deserved. To have local talent succeed at the highest levels is inspiring and something we should all celebrate.

I want you to know that this is a reminder of what can be achieved with hard work, passion and determination. Their outstanding success reminds us all that we must continue to support local talent and ensure that we are doing all we can to help Ontarians realize their full potential. I'd like to congratulate both of these local artists and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours.

CANADIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to thank the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for coming to Queen's Park today and thank them for all they do to support blind or partially sighted Canadians in helping them build the confidence and skills to go about their daily lives.

I've always been a strong advocate for the work CNIB does, whether that be providing audio books or hard-copy books written in Braille, giving peer support for those who feel depressed or angry with their vision loss, or teaching CNIB clients tips on how to complete tasks many of us take advantage of in our daily lives.

I personally struggle with keratoconus, a degenerative disorder of the eye where the cornea thins and changes shape to a more cone-like structure, causing substantial distortion of my vision. Luckily, I have a way to deal with my eye condition using special contact lenses, but I understand the struggle many Ontarians face and how critical post-vision-loss rehabilitation therapy is to our health care system.

As a member of this Legislature, I look forward to working with CNIB as they move forward on their Path to Change to ensure our vision care in Ontario's health care system supports our aging population and those who need special vision care.

I welcome all MPPs and their staff to the reception this evening in the dining room from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. to speak with those from CNIB so you can learn more about the important support they provide across Ontario and throughout Canada.

BUY LOCAL

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'd like to use my time to highlight something I see happening across my riding and across the province.

We're seeing people really starting to support their local communities by buying local. They are turning to local farmers' markets, local wineries and local workers, to highlight a few examples. They are even going on staycations, where they stay at home and see their local sites and entertainment, giving back to their community and the tourism sector. I've been calling on communities to buy local for years. I'm very happy to see that so many people are supporting that initiative.

In my riding, I'd like to commend Dan Patterson, president of Niagara College, for opening up their pre-qualifying bid process to allow bids from local contractors. This kind of thing creates an opportunity for skilled tradespeople who live and work in Niagara. By expanding their list of pre-qualified bidders, they were able to include two local companies. By making room for locals and supporting our local electricians, construction workers and builders, we're making sure good, decent jobs get back into our communities.

1510

I'd like to see this trend continue, especially with our new hospital in Niagara Falls. I'd like to see this province buy local and support our local wineries and our local arts and culture across the province. By taking into account areas where there is high unemployment and by focusing on buy-local strategies, we can put good, hard-working Ontarians back to work.

DELLA TAYLOR

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to celebrate a remarkable person from my riding of Newmarket-Aurora. On February 15 I had the opportunity to present long-time northern York region resident

Della Taylor with a certificate to honour her 100th birthday.

Della was born on February 9, 1915, on a farm near the beautiful hamlet of Lloydtown, not too far from my riding and in the township of King. This was a significant year, not only for Della and her parents, but also for the shaping of Canada's future, for it was the early days of the Great War, which forged our nation's early identity.

Della's strong constitution was built on the family farm, where she learned not only how to run a household but also how to run a farm. It was on this farm that she met her future husband, William.

With the 1930s came the Great Depression, yet Della and William did not let that stop them from marrying in 1934. That union resulted in three children—William, Barbara and Bernard—as well as five great-grandchildren and 12 great-great-grandchildren.

Reaching 100 years of age is a great milestone. Through their hard work and selflessness and determination, this generation was witness to a country coming of age. We thank Della Taylor and her friends and her family for building a fantastic province and a fantastic country. Della Taylor, we thank you. Happy birthday.

BELLEVILLE DOWNTOWN DOCFEST

Mr. Todd Smith: The member opposite was earlier referencing Sunday night's Oscar awards, and quite a show it was as the red carpet was rolled out in Los Angeles and they handed out the Oscars in California. Well, there is a big event this weekend in Belleville. They'll be rolling out the green carpet for the fourth annual 2015 Belleville Downtown DocFest. Who knows? We may have some future Oscar winners as a result of having their films on display this weekend in downtown Belleville.

By the way, Lady Gaga was great on Sunday night doing the Sound of Music medley. Loved it. But I digress.

The international documentary film festival kicks off with the screening of *Keep On Keepin'* On on Friday night at the Empire Theatre. The film tells the story of an unlikely mentorship between jazz legend Clark Terry and Justin Kauflin, who's a young piano prodigy. Kauflin is actually going to be onstage at the Empire as the film is being played, and then he's going to Centennial Secondary School and meeting 150 music students from nine local high schools in the region and talking to them about the film and about music.

The film festival, while it's a great opportunity to show 50 different documentaries over the three-day festival, is also an opportunity to engage young people. I think that's what this is all about at a number of different locations throughout Belleville's core. The DocFest offers local filmmakers, as I mentioned, an opportunity to show off their work. Fourteen local filmmakers will have their docs hit the screen, including Belleville's Aaron Bell. The story that he's telling is Crawford: Family of Champions. Floyd Crawford moved to Belleville in the

1950s. He became the captain of Belleville's McFarlands hockey team that went on, in 1959, to win the world championship. But the big story is the offspring; there are nine of them who have gone on to incredible things, including Marc Crawford, who won coach of the year in the NHL and a Stanley Cup with the Colorado Avalanche.

Congratulations to everybody involved in Belleville's downtown DocFest. I look forward to hitting the green carpet on Friday night.

SAFEHAVEN

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize an organization doing tremendous work in my riding of Davenport. In January I visited the Safehaven Project for Community Living, a respite centre providing care for children with multiple disabilities and complex medical needs.

For over 25 years, Safehaven's doors have been open to help children from zero to 18 with special needs in Toronto and the central Ontario region. Safehaven provides a unique service as it recognizes that very rarely do children with special needs fit into exclusive silos of care. Children at Safehaven are treated for numerous conditions, and many are unable to walk, see or hear.

Safehaven is equipped with high-quality, trained and very motivated staff with expertise in dealing with children with many complex ailments.

All children at Safehaven are granted a room equipped with specially designed beds to suit the needs of the specific child. And importantly, families remain involved in all aspects of their child's life at Safehaven.

When I toured the great facilities at Safehaven, I met with many of the children as well as several dedicated staff members, including Beverley Gordon and Kimberley Gadwah. Beverley started Safehaven 25 years ago and will be retiring in March.

I'm proud to say that our government has generously supported the important services provided at Safehaven. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has provided over \$200,000 in out-of-home respite funding, as well as money to facilitate renewing the building this year.

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to represent this fantastic organization and I look forward to assisting them in any way I can.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday I was honoured to be invited to speak at the Kitchener Masjid, to a large gathering of my constituents in the Muslim community, on a very serious issue, and that is domestic abuse. This is a deeply disturbing issue that affects many families and crosses all boundaries, no matter the social, cultural or economic context. Violence and harassment against women should not be tolerated, and women who find themselves in these circumstances need to know that there is help for them.

This is the message that I delivered to the gathering. In 2013, our government introduced the Domestic Violence Action Plan, which included \$14.5 million in increased funding for women's shelters.

Mr. Speaker, within some communities, it's very difficult for women to leave an abusive relationship, as they face shame and isolation. Although they've done nothing wrong, they are accused of dishonouring their families by going public with the abuse that they're living with.

I was recently asked to chair the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment against women. Our job is going to be to address prevention and consider ways to shift social norms and other barriers that prevent people from coming forward.

I want to thank the people who attended the event at the Kitchener Masjid for being courageous enough to want to talk about domestic abuse, and I say let's keep the conversation going.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Hatfield assumes ballot item number 35 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 59.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, I'm sorry I missed the introduction of visitors, but I do want to recognize that there are many leaders from the black community here today. I'm not going to name them all, but I do see Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society, and also Dr. Catherine Chandler-Crichlow, a leader in the financial services community. I also see my dear friend Lawrence Dawkins, the president of my PLA, and many other friends I would like to welcome here today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated February 24, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Associate Minister of Finance, Minister Hunter.

Speaker, I rise today to recognize February as Black History Month. Black History Month is a great occasion for everyone to appreciate the achievements of black Ontarians.

1520

The history of people with African heritage who have come to Canada can be traced back to 1603. Later, during the mid-1800s, Harriet Tubman, a former slave herself, helped enslaved African Americans use the Underground Railroad to escape to freedom across the Ontario border to St. Catharines, where she lived for nearly a decade.

Black Ontarians proudly served in the War of 1812, in both World War I and World War II and in other conflicts, past and present.

However, recognition was often slow and hard-won. It took a long time before Canada elected its first black member of Parliament, Lincoln Alexander, in 1968. Mr. Alexander later became Ontario's Lieutenant Governor.

This province's black history is not only full of historic and political legends. We also have an abundance of music legends, such as the late Oscar Peterson and the popular singer-songwriter Dan Hill, brother of literary star Lawrence Hill, who is the author of the award-winning novel *The Book of—*the word starts with an N.

Their father, human rights activist Daniel G. Hill, was instrumental in founding the Ontario Black History Society in 1978. He was later Ontario Human Rights Commissioner and Ontario Ombudsman.

In the sports world, the province has produced many black sports heroes, including Fergie Jenkins, the first Canadian to be inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame. How about—

Applause.

Hon. Michael Chan: I like that.

How about Michael "Pinball" Clemons, and P.K. Subban, who currently plays for the Montreal Canadiens; Drake—my friend—an accomplished actor and rapper; and Anthony Bennett and Andrew Wiggins, who were each drafted first overall in the 2013 and 2014 NBA drafts.

Do it again.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Chan: In the business world, Michael Lee-Chin is an example of a notable Ontarian, originally from Jamaica, who has made major business, cultural and charitable contributions in our province.

As Ontario's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, I know how important immigration and diversity are to building a province that is strong both culturally and economically.

I urge everyone to participate in the many events taking place across the province during this Black History Month, to better understand and appreciate the extraordinary contributions made by Ontario's black community.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to stand in the Legislature today, alongside my colleague the honourable Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, to recognize and celebrate the importance of Black History Month. Each year, February is a special opportunity to acknowledge the history of the black community in Canada, celebrate our triumphs and look forward to the future.

The black community in Canada has a long and storied history of hardship, resilience and hope. As the minister highlighted, we have had amazing achievements that have advanced humankind, but it is important to remember that we have also faced horrible hardships.

This is why I am particularly enthusiastic to join with you to celebrate Black History Month. As with all such occasions, it invites us to reflect and consider the most enduring truths of our collective lives—for example, that each of us has a unique and purpose-filled role in keeping this province and this country great.

In my own Black History Month reflections, I came across Mathieu Da Costa, who was the first known black man to arrive in the land that would later become known as Canada. A free man, not a slave or indentured servant, he was a member of the European exploration parties of the early 17th century, most notably those of Samuel de Champlain. His portfolio of languages, including Dutch, French, Portuguese and pidgin Basque—the language used by many First Nations people for trading purposes—made him a highly sought-after interpreter, translator and go-between by the French, Dutch and English. He was also fluent in the Mi'kmaq dialect and the eastern Algonquian languages before joining Champlain's expeditions, which suggests that he had been to North America before Champlain. His translation and communication skills helped bridge the cultural gap between early French explorers and the First Nations.

Think about it: More than 100 years before the Fathers of Confederation were even born, someone who looked like me, who looked like more than half a million black people who call Ontario home, stood as a highly skilled professional and free man, shoulder to shoulder with the father of New France to lay the groundwork for a brand new nation.

Mathieu Da Costa did not appear in the pages of my grade school or high school Canadian history books. But thanks to Black History Month, he and thousands of other heroes of the black community, both known and obscure, take their rightful place among Canadian greats—past, present and future.

It is stories like this that remind us that, as members of the Legislature, lawmakers, we have a tremendous responsibility. We have a responsibility to ensure that we're creating laws that enable people to reach their full potential. We have a responsibility to ensure that we're

building a fair, inclusive society that truly recognizes diversity as a strength.

Why is this important? It's important because while Ontario remains a model of diversity, civil society and prosperity, we still have not achieved a perfect union. Inequalities among groups still exist. And still, too often, race, ethnicity, income, mental and physical health, gender and gender identity are markers of disadvantage.

But Black History Month inspires hope. It is an integral part of our shared identity as Ontarians.

We are one Ontario. And a vital and vibrant part of who we are can be seen in the story of black people in Canada, a story that speaks to invention, innovation and leadership in all aspects of Canadian reality—past, present and future. From the professions to the arts, from entertainment to sports—yes, including hockey—to education, to science and to politics, it is a story of struggle and of overcoming, of family and community, of entrepreneurship and hard work. It is a story that rightfully takes its place among our collective Canadian success stories. And I boldly say that it is a story whose most exciting chapter has yet to be written.

Enjoy the rest of Black History Month. I know I will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is my privilege today to speak and recognize Black History Month on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus. The month of February is set aside as Black History Month and is an important annual celebration of Ontarians who trace their family heritage to Africa and the Caribbean. It is also a time to reflect on the struggles of African Canadians for fair treatment and equal opportunity.

1530

The proud legacy of black Ontarians goes back to the early beginnings of Canadian history. The great sacrifices and tremendous contributions of their community have helped to create the Canada we have today.

Every year, Ontarians are invited to participate in Black History Month festivities and events that honour the legacy of black Canadians past and present. I, too, want to welcome the guests in the lobby. I was able to attend some of the events that occurred yesterday, and I wish you all the best in your many events over the rest of the month. Throughout the month, people can gain insight from these events into their experiences and their vital role in the community.

Ontario's black community has a long and proud history in our province. In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to formally designate February as Black History Month. It's also true that over half of black Canadians live in the province of Ontario. In Ontario we have many black leaders who have also stood for the fairness that we value here in the province. Their activism led to outlawing discrimination in the workplace and inspired those who continue to work against discrimination in many forms.

There are many African Canadians who have made many important contributions to Canada's diversity, cul-

ture, economy, literature, sports, politics—many names were mentioned; we could go on. I just personally want to put in my fondly remembered family friend Lincoln Alexander.

This year, on January 21, we marked the first Lincoln Alexander Day, which was proclaimed to celebrate his life and achievements. Lincoln Alexander became the first black member of Parliament in Canada on June 25, 1968, and was, proudly, a friend of my dad, Bill Scott, who was a member of Parliament at that time. Thus the connection began with our families. In 1985, he also became the first visible minority to be appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Again, such a distinguished gentleman, he took the time to come out to our small-town fair in Kinmount—which is our hometown—to open it, which was a great honour for all of us there.

I think credit should be given now to Ted Arnott, the MPP for Wellington–Halton Hills, Bas Balkissoon, the MPP for Scarborough–Rouge River, and Paul Miller, the MPP for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who all co-introduced that bill; Bill 125, it was called. In 2008—we'll go back a little bit further in time—the member from Wellington–Halton Hills introduced Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day. The bill proclaims August 1 in each year as Emancipation Day, in recognition of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire on August 1, 1834.

We all know the significant role Canada played as a sanctuary for slaves during the 18th and 19th centuries. Over 30,000 were able to escape the oppression of slavery and found freedom in Canada by way of the Underground Railway. That bill also recognizes the heritage of Ontario's black communities and the contributions that they continue to make to Ontario.

I'm honoured to rise in the short time that I have today to recognize this important celebration of black history and the achievements of black Ontarians. I encourage everyone to enjoy the festivities in the rest of the month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of New Democrats in acknowledgement of Black History Month. Black Canadians have a long and rich history in this country. It is vital that we take this time each year to reflect on our history and on the history that we will create with each passing day.

Just earlier this afternoon, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh mentioned to me that, in his riding, a black cemetery has received heritage status in the town of Tecumseh. Some of the people buried in this cemetery were alive before the abolition of slavery in Canada. The descendants of those buried in the Smith Cemetery can visit and remember the lives and struggles of their ancestors.

In a news story about the cemetery, Glen Cook, whose great-uncle is buried in Smith Cemetery, said, "It means a lot that we can use this as a learning process." Across Ontario and across Canada, we should all use Black History Month as a part of our learning process. Indeed, we all have a lot to learn.

Ontario is fortunate to be home to one of the most diverse populations in the world. Over half of the population of black Canadians lives in Ontario. This includes people whose ancestors date back to the time of the Underground Railroad, as well as new immigrants, many of them francophone, who continue to bring something new and contribute greatly to their communities.

In Kitchener–Waterloo, Emma Cohen, a student at Waterloo Collegiate Institute, recently won first prize in a Black History Month essay competition. In her essay, she touched on the work of Josiah Henson, a former slave who led others to safety through the Underground Railroad. Josiah Henson's home for many years is now located in Dresden, Ontario, and it's known to many of us as Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site. Visitors can learn about the life of Josiah, as well as the history of the Underground Railroad, which brought as many as 100,000 former slaves to freedom in Canada. Many of them settled in southwestern Ontario.

We should, of course, be proud when we look back at the history of the Underground Railroad in Ontario. But we must not forget how much work there is left to be done. We must remember that racism still exists in this province and in this country today and that we are not far removed from the prejudices and the injustices of the past.

In Ontario, we are not immune to the racism and racial tensions we see consistently in the United States. We must confront these issues head on in order to move forward. We must be honest in order to change.

I want to mention that the Association of Black Students at Wilfrid Laurier University is hosting a Black Lives Matter cultural event this Friday to celebrate self-expression, to discuss what it means to be black in Canada and to illuminate conversations around justice in our country.

In 2008, during the debate on the Emancipation Day Act, the former member from Welland, our dear Peter Kormos, stressed the importance of having difficult conversations about race, about prejudice, about our history, about slavery and about the ongoing racism in Ontario. He said, "We reflect upon these things, not because we want to weary ourselves with that recollection, but because we want to prepare ourselves for the struggle that continues...."

"This isn't ancient history; it's current history, and the struggle is a current one too." We should heed Mr. Kormos's words in order to move forward as a province, as a country and as a community.

Rosemary Brown, a New Democrat who sat as an MLA in BC, the first black woman to sit in a provincial Legislature, said, "We must open the doors and we must see to it they remain open, so that others can pass through."

So let us use this occasion, yes, to have those courageous conversations, but more importantly, to act on our convictions in order to encourage others to pass through those doors of democracy, of justice and of equality. Today, we should celebrate our progress, but we should remember our past, and this is the best place to make that change happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments. I have one small editorial. In my brief friendship with Lincoln Alexander, I recall our first meeting when he was coming back to the Legislature as a guest, as a former Lieutenant Governor, and I was the Speaker. We had a conversation, and it finally got around to which party I represented, and he said, "You know, everyone's allowed one lapse of judgement." And then I said to him, "I forgive you."

Anyway, thank you very much for your comments, and good luck the rest of the month.

PETITIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as an 'extra payment covered by the ratepayers over and above the actual market price of electricity'; and

"Whereas wind power is simply unreliable, blows mostly at night when we don't need power, creating a surplus Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take it, and the total cost of producing the exported power was about \$2.6 billion more than the revenue Ontario received from exporting that power between 2006 and 2013; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has risen from \$700 million prior to the Green Energy Act to \$7.7 billion by 2013, and over the past decade, the cumulated amount is about \$50 billion; and
1540

"Whereas Ontario now has the highest industrial rates in North America, and residential hydro bills are forecast to increase 42% by 2018 after peak hydro rates have already more than tripled since 2003; and

"Whereas local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders have voiced concerns about wind farm installations proposed by Innergex in Merrick and Mattawan townships in the riding of Nipissing;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on these proposed wind projects and the government's expensive energy policy by cancelling feed-in-tariff (FIT) subsidies, implementing an immediate moratorium on wind power development, and giving municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities."

I agree with this, Speaker, will sign it and give it to page Natalie.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Toronto Transit Commission will have"—or did have—"an estimated ridership of 503 million in 2012;

"Whereas the TTC received only \$91 million from the province of Ontario for operations in the 2010-11 fiscal year with a total TTC budget of \$1.5 billion;

"Whereas fare boxes account for 70% to 80% of total TTC costs, making it one of the highest fare-recovery ratios in North America;

"Whereas the TTC recommended another 10-cent fare increase to all riders again this year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pledge stable and long-term funding of the" Toronto Transit Commission "and other municipally run transit authorities in Ontario and ensure that provincial funding be restored to 50% of the operating subsidy; and

"That transit authorities who accept that restored funding freeze or reduce their fares."

I couldn't agree more; I'm going to give it to Muntder to be delivered to the table.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on population-based legal services funding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds in the ... budget, and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Inaya to carry it for me.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I have a very detailed, very specific petition that relates to many, many problems around MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. In the interests of time and to respect your previous rulings, I will not read all of it, but I will go to:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a committee to inquire and judicially review assessment decisions, processes, representations, legislation and the actions or inactions of public officials, appointees and employees

and make recommendations and findings on the following”—and then there are nine very specific requests of the committee.

It is my pleasure to support this petition and to give it to page Hannah to take to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition I've been asked to present, collected by Dr. Charles Frank, a constituent of mine in Windsor–Tecumseh. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I will hand this petition to page Muntder for presentation to the table officers.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

I agree with this, affix my signature and give it to page Natalie.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to pass Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase to the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

“Whereas Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

“Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction of their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To support Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay.”

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Niko to give to the table.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came to me from Diane Roy, who is a resident in my riding in beautiful Westree, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario...

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ali to bring it to the Clerk.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I support this wonderful petition. I affix my signature to it, and I kindly give it to page Madison to bring to the Clerk.

1550

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I agree with this, sign my name to it and will give it to page Julie.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

I couldn't agree with this more. Thousands have already signed it, and I'll add my name to theirs and give it to Hannah to be delivered to the table.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I also have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this petition, affix my name and give it to page Ishani.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Auditor General of the province of Ontario has stated that the cost of the Liberals' smart meter program is \$2 billion, or more than a billion dollars higher than the government originally said it would cost; and

“Whereas electricity rates have increased by more than 100% since the current government, most of that coming after the introduction of smart meters; and

“Whereas the high electricity rates created by this government are making life less affordable for families and businesses;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario as follows:

“That this government take all measures to lower electricity rates, up to and including the end of smart meters, that it has caused to skyrocket over its term in office.”

I’ll send this to the table with Inaya.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L’ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 19, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l’établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l’Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It does give me great pleasure to speak to this bill today, Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act.

I want to start by thanking the Associate Minister of Finance for her excellent work on this file. I know she has been across the province and has held consultations in numerous communities to get feedback, to bring the bill to its current form, and is seeking additional feedback as we move forward in presenting this bill to the people of Ontario and in getting the regulations right, to move forward with it.

Let’s be very clear: What we are doing here with this bill is we are satisfying an election promise, a promise that we made in the June campaign as we went out to the people of Ontario in the last general election.

I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that I went door to door—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What would it matter to you guys whether you kept a promise?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would have come to your door if you had been in my neighbourhood.

I came door to door, and I found repeatedly how people at the door responded very, very well to the notion that we are not saving enough—those who rely on CPP are not saving enough for their future retirement—and as a result they were encouraged. I know that many people in my community of Beaches–East York supported the

party, supported our plan to bring forward an Ontario retirement pension plan, because it’s the right thing to do.

I heard this support not just from the younger and the middle-aged people who will directly benefit, but I heard the support from seniors in my riding. I heard the support from seniors, seniors who will not be benefiting because they will not have been in the system long enough to benefit, but seniors who recognize amongst their friends and sometimes themselves, that the CPP was not giving them the benefits that they needed to live in a comfortable retirement situation. So they were prepared to throw in their support because they want to ensure that young people growing up in Ontario are going to have adequate retirement income—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, yes, right. I did neglect to say that I will be sharing my time with the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Trinity–Spadina, and Burlington, so the members opposite won’t have me to heckle for much longer.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that it is our preference that this upgrade in the CPP happens from the federal government. We have been appealing to the federal government to increase the retirement benefits under CPP, and they have repeatedly turned down this request.

Whether we will be able to get provincial support across the country—in Quebec and BC—to support this plan and put further pressure, remains to be seen. Or we’ll see in the next federal election, when our cousins the federal Liberals have an opportunity to bring this part in their policy platform, that it may completely obviate the need for us to move forward with a made-in-Ontario plan, because the federal Liberals might in fact win a majority position or, with the support of our NDP friends in Ottawa, would bring this proposal forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that if we do bring this bill forward—because we have not been able to bring it at the federal level, to increase the benefit of those relying on CPP—we will ensure that we minimize the cost of all administrations associated with this. We don’t want to completely duplicate a process. We want the process—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: To the bellicose member: We want to make sure that the process is streamlined and efficient so that we bring value to the Canadian people.

I have a constituent in my riding, Mr. William Jack, who has a company, William D. Jack and Associates, who spends a lot of time in actuarial sciences, reviewing pension plans, reviewing, on behalf of corporate clients, and introducing—I’ll be up front: He has concerns with what we are doing here. He comes from the perspective that we are richer than we think.

If we think about the fact that those people who are making contributions through RRSPs—many of those middle-income and higher-income people are well off. They may own homes. They may have membership in a pension plan with their work, a defined benefit plan,

which guarantees in their retirement that they in fact will have income security.

But he's concerned, and he asked a friend of his from the University of Waterloo, a professor, and he said, "What is it that we should be concerned about?"

1600

The professor at Waterloo, an expert in these fields, says:

"I am not concerned about long-service public sector employees or highly paid individuals...."

"I am concerned about middle-income Canadians who do not have long service in a" defined benefit "plan."

"I am also concerned about those with breaks in income or who have started employment later in life or who have fragile labour market attachment or who have or are spouses of people who have outlived their savings...."

"I am also concerned about youth unemployment...."

It may be that what we are looking at is to support those who are in a 15% to 20% bracket, but those people who rely on CPP currently are underfunded in their retirement benefits. We're going to ensure that this is not going to go forward for middle-income earners or lower-income earners who are in their middle age, and young people moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to turn my time over now to the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Beaches—East York.

I now refer to the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you. Écoutez, monsieur le Président, je suis honorée d'avoir la chance de parler au sujet du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

On reconnaît bien le problème. De nombreuses études ont prouvé que le système actuel ne répond pas aux besoins de la majorité des Ontariens. Deux tiers des Ontariens n'ont pas de régime de retraite privé. Selon un sondage réalisé par le RRPO, nous faisons face à six Canadiens sur 10 épargnent en vue de la retraite, mais la plupart ne croient pas qu'ils ont assez d'argent pour vivre une retraite confortable. La classe moyenne n'épargne pas assez de façon volontaire.

Le Régime de pensions du Canada n'est pas assez—on l'a vérifié—pour une bonne qualité de vie pour le futur. Je crois qu'il est important de noter que sans notre initiative concernant le RRPO, nous faisons face à une incertitude économique croissante qui menace notre économie et nos entreprises.

Nous avons été clairs que la solution privilégiée serait l'amélioration du RPC. Cependant, le gouvernement fédéral a unilatéralement mis fin à ces discussions. Nous ne pouvons pas attendre. Nous allons de l'avant avec une solution ontarienne dans le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

Cela étant dit, notre gouvernement est conscient de l'impact du RRPO sur les entreprises. Le gouvernement reste déterminé à travailler en partenariat avec les

entreprises pour minimiser l'impact à court terme et les aider à créer un plan pour la mise en oeuvre du RRPO.

On February 10, I had the great pleasure of welcoming Associate Minister Hunter to my riding of Ottawa—Orléans, where local business owners, the Orléans Chamber of Commerce and other stakeholders participated in a round table.

As a previous business owner, I looked at previous pension plans, and most of them were just too costly. As a former employer, I ask business to look at this as a long-term investment in their employees, as a way to retain their employees. And let's be clear: This is not a tax.

Associate Minister Hunter, as I mentioned, has engaged not only with my riding of Ottawa—Orléans but with people across the province to hear their views on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. It's very consistent amongst her conversations: Everyone is mostly in agreement that people are not saving enough for retirement—a problem that has the potential to impact everyone.

Economists, like former governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge, have told us that this will be good for the economy in the long run. Higher incomes among retirees mean stable consumption in the future and a decreased reliance on publicly funded social services, improving job and economic growth in the long term.

We want to ensure that we're creating the best plan for the people of this province.

Le RRPO sera mis en oeuvre, si adopté, en 2017, de manière à coïncider avec les réductions envisagées dans les cotisations à l'assurance-emploi. Les employeurs et employés seront inscrits dans le RRPO par phase, en commençant avec les plus grandes entreprises. Les contributions entreront progressivement en vigueur au cours de deux ans, leur donnant ainsi le temps de s'adapter. Les entreprises qui ont un régime de retraite comparable seront exclues du programme, ainsi que les travailleurs indépendants.

The plan design detail is being developed and we look forward to receiving people's input as we continue this engagement. This is about balancing the needs of today's workforce against the need of an aging population. It is about securing our collective futures so we can all rest assured. That's why we're taking the action now to ensure a strong economy for the future, and I ask the members opposite to support our bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member—sorry, my fault. A slight delay. There's a feed delay here. I thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Trinity—Spadina.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No, no, over here, Ottawa—Orléans; I thanked her.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): And now I recognize the member from Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak on this very important matter on behalf of the people of the great riding of Trinity—Spadina. I thank the member across for pointing this out

to the Speaker. He is my good friend, so I'm going to speak to the facts, as I promised.

First of all, I want to commend the minister for acting swiftly on this very important matter that we set out in our platform. I think it's very timely because we are set to implement this in January 2017, so we need the legislative framework to allow us to do that.

I think it's very important to point out the fact that we're debating this in this House because the federal government refused to look into improvements to the CPP, the Canada Pension Plan. As a son of two retired seniors living on fixed incomes in the downtown core, I do see the need to move on this agenda. My parents will not be able to benefit from this initiative, but I do see the challenges they are facing, as do many others, facing the rising real estate values for their principal homes. They are not in the market to sell their residence. As the value triples and quadruples, especially in the downtown core, in my riding, they look at a large number in property tax that they have to come up with. It's very, very difficult for seniors living on a fixed income and on the very inadequate CPP that they have contributed into. So I think this is very timely and very necessary.

I look around to my friends, my friends around my age. I'm very fortunate that I have a job that I completely love and it compensates, I have to be honest, quite well. Although I don't have a pension plan, I think, with careful planning, I should do well. But my friends who are earning \$50,000 or \$70,000 or \$90,000 don't have a plan; a lot of them don't have a plan about their retirement. To be honest, at the age of around 30 or 40, you don't think about this. You look at paying off your student loan; you look at paying into the mortgage; you look at raising a family. You rarely plan ahead. I think it's the government's job, that we're elected here to represent the people back home and it's our job to look ahead and plan ahead and see what's necessary for our citizens to retire with an adequate bank account to support their lifestyle.

Secondly, I want to point out that this is not a tax. It is a benefit. It is a benefit that's contributed to by the employer and the employee. How much? It's 1.9% by each.

1610

What does that mean? Well, we say it's 1.9% up to \$90,000, so the maximum contribution per year is \$1,710. If you do the math, divided by 52 weeks—because most of us work all year, and get compensated all year—it works out to be \$6.57 a day, maximum, if someone is earning \$90,000. I'm just thinking that if an employer is willing to compensate an employee for \$90,000—that's less than a McDonald's lunch per day—I think that employer should have the respect and the urgency to retain that valuable employee and should be willing to contribute to the future of that employee.

That brings me to another point I noticed. If this bill gets passed and we're able to implement this in 2017, that actually gives small business an advantage in competing with the larger employers. Because, as we know, the larger employers offer workplace pension plans and the smaller ones don't. In fact, 65% of Ontarians do not

have a workplace pension plan. So to be able to offer that will help them to retain the talent that is needed very much in this competitive global market.

Third, I want to bring to the House's attention some of the experiences I had during last summer/fall, when I knocked on doors and consulted with my constituents on this very urgent matter. Some asked questions such as: "I'm already contributing to my RRSP. I do have a plan for my retirement." What I said to them was, "Look, with this new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, you are better off, because not only you are contributing to your future, your employer will be contributing to that future as well, so it's actually a better plan than your RRSP." When I said that, people started to come around and say, "You know what? We do need this."

Again I want to point out to the House that, as a government, we're elected to this place to protect our citizens and our citizens' future, and this bill is very necessary to our citizens and constituents back home. We should be looking to the facts, and whether or not it will truly help people like us, the real working class, the 65% that I mentioned, and I think the answer is yes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I noticed that the member from Beaches—East York was quoting from a university professor. Well, I can do the same thing, Speaker.

When we were on the pre-budget consultations and travelled throughout Ontario, the pain that will be inflicted by this pension tax came up frequently. It was professor Ian Lee, from the Sprott school, who talked about the fact—he was actually quite detailed in how harmful this will be to the economy. He made a particular point when he talked about the fact that the Guaranteed Income Supplement would be reduced. So people who will begin to pay into this will continue to pay. The lowest income earners who are paying into this, losing 1.9% of their pay—if they keep their job, because their employer will also lose a further 1.9%—when they do get to retire, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, which is there to top up their pay, won't need to be topped up as far. So they're going to come out at the end of the day with the same amount of pay, 40 years from now, except they lost all the money in the early days when they needed it the most. This pension tax is just a backward set-up.

If you look at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and virtually every other business organization, they all came up with the same conclusion: Mitigate the impact of pension reform on the business climate.

Many businesses are worried about the costs this pension tax will impose. As it moves towards implementing the new pension tax, the government must conduct and publish an economic analysis. That's something that we have not seen from them.

Speaker, we'll be talking more about this throughout the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand on behalf of the residents of Windsor–Tecumseh and make a few comments. It always is a pleasure to stand in this House and add comment.

I heard various members on the other side—I believe it was the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Trinity–Spadina, Beaches–East York and the Associate Minister of Finance—talk about it. I'm glad to see that they finally said that this is their plan B. Plan A, of course, is to have the problem fixed in Ottawa, right? I think we'd all agree with that. For the first time, I heard that this is plan B: If they don't fix it there, we'll fix it here. I think that's a good thing.

I know that on behalf of the NDP, our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a bill back in 2010 calling for an Ontario pension plan. I think it's good that our friends on the other side have finally taken that initiative, changed it around it a bit but are presenting it back.

I have to tell you, this does have legs. The minister came to Windsor, and I know we had some people show up at a public meeting to talk about it. The president of our labour council, Chris Taylor, a friend of mine who represents Local 200, the Ford workers, was first on his feet to say we need it. I think we all, in Ontario, appreciate the fact that the CPP isn't doing what it was supposed to do, and it needs to be fixed, and it needs to be fixed in Ottawa, and that's plan A.

If we can fix it in the next federal election, as has been suggested, maybe we will. If we don't, then we fall back on plan B. I think that's a good thing. But let's work on the feds, coming up this year, later on, and make it a big election issue.

Thank you for your time today, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to make a couple of comments. As my colleague from Beaches–East York has said clearly, our party made this announcement during the last election, and it's a commitment we made to the public.

I just want to share with you that when I went door to door in my riding—and I would say my riding is middle-to lower-income—this was a major issue for many of my residents, and I'm going to tell you which ones especially: It is those people who have worked 30 or 40 years and have built their assets. They've got their own home. They depend on living on CPP, and it's just not making it to pay the bills they have. A lot of these seniors are asset-rich, but they cannot cash their assets in. They see this as something that, in the future, will help the next generation, and they welcome it.

I had a couple of businesses actually make comments that it's 1.9% on their business. I reminded them, when this government got elected, what the tax on their business was, and that we had reduced their taxation way more than 1.9% of their payroll. After I had a lengthy discussion with them and explained the realities of the people who live in my riding, they welcomed the change and said, "Okay, we understand what you're doing. We're supportive."

If I could just add, to my friend from the NDP: It is a plan that the government resorted to because the federal government refused to be at the discussion table, to look at the realities of CPP today not meeting the needs of the people, and changes need to come.

My friend from Nipissing mentioned the GIS problem. I welcome that discussion, and I'm sure that the minister is going to take that into consideration as we develop the plan. It will go to committee. I would urge him to raise the issue there and make sure it gets included in the plan.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise and bring a few comments on behalf of those from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Unlike the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, when I was walking the streets in the election campaign last spring, when we were talking about this, I didn't hear from anyone who was supportive of this idea of an ORPP or another payroll tax or a pension scheme or whatever you want to call it, because businesses are already struggling out there. The economy needs a major kick-start. This is a major setback for the economy in the province of Ontario. We're struggling right now in Ontario. I don't know if the Liberals are willing to admit that or not. Ontario's economy is really, really struggling.

I just would make reference to a newspaper report from the Toronto Star. It was written by Jamison Steeve, who was actually the principal secretary in the Office of the Premier. It says:

"Basically, Ontario's economy is not producing as much wealth as planned, hoped or expected.

"This was no surprise to those of us working in the field of competitiveness and productivity. In our latest annual report, we found that Ontario's prosperity gap with its North American peers is going in the wrong direction....

"What does this mean? It means less money in the pockets of regular Ontarians. And it means less money in the public coffers to purchase the public goods that can improve the lives of all Ontarians."

The economy in Ontario is struggling right now. Every business organization, whether it's the Canadian Federation of Independent Business; the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Jack Mintz, a well-known economist—the list goes on and on—everyone is panning this idea, including the very bright people who own businesses and work in Prince Edward–Hastings riding. This payroll tax, this pension scheme, this ORPP is bad news for the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Ottawa–Orléans for final comments.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I thank everyone for having a conversation about this wonderful, for us, I believe, initiative.

When I think about our current system—and I think a member of the third party has reflected on this—our first choice was and will always be a federal partner with this.

Unfortunately, the partner is not there right now. So we have taken this very strong initiative of moving forward on bringing a pension plan for all Ontarians.

I think this is a bold and significant milestone in what our government will be doing not only for today but for securing the future of more than three million Ontarians who have no pension. When you look at what it means in the life of the individual as they're aging, this will represent an extra income—where when we talk economy, they'll have an extra income that has secured their livelihood, so they can continue contributing in a good way to our system, our economy, our small businesses.

Yes, businesses have demonstrated concerns, but we're listening to them.

I think this is what's most important for the people of Ontario to realize: This is not a tax. This is a way for us to ensure that, in the future, we're protecting the aging population of Ontarians.

It gives me great pleasure to be here, standing in this House, talking and debating. I sure hope that the members opposite will see what it means for our economy.

Just a little note: I was actually on economic development in Ottawa, and it's totally the opposite. We talked about a 3.2% increase in our economy in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 56, the Ontario pension tax plan.

I heard the member from Beaches–East York talk about campaigning, as well, last year, in June 2014. I never had a single person come up to me and say, “We need to proceed with this Ontario pension tax.” Never a single one.

But the funny thing about these things is that when you initiate a conversation and you try to create the impression—this is what the Liberals have done. There are so many reasons to be against this pension tax, let me count the ways, as they say. But when you try to create the story by trying to convince the public that they're going to get something for nothing—this is what the Liberals went around talking about: “This pension is going to solve everything. We're going to take this tax and we're going to make everybody's life so much better, you won't recognize the Ontario of the future.” You're right about one thing: We won't recognize the Ontario of the future because for every day that you people are in government it gets bleaker and bleaker and bleaker.

However, I digress. You're telling people that this pension scheme is somehow going to mean the difference between a retirement of struggling in poverty to Shangri-La. Let's get a few facts straight: You're going to tax people at 1.9% of their income, and the employer is going to also have to pay in 1.9% of their income.

One of the things they're complaining about is that people aren't putting enough money away. That's why we brought out—years and years ago, decades ago, they brought out the RRSP. They brought out the RRSP so people would have an opportunity to put money away for their retirement. They recognized then that under the

current circumstances they would not be able to retire without some kind of supplemental income.

If you've got people who are not maxing out their RRSPs, but to whatever extent they can, what makes you think that taxing them a further 1.9% on their paycheques, a payroll tax, and taxing the employer and putting it into a plan that—who out there believes that the Ontario government does a better job of managing their money than they do themselves?

You want to talk about a classic case of the pot and the kettle. The Ontario government, my good God, is going to look after people because they aren't saving enough money. This is the group that brought us—a \$300-billion debt is where we're headed, and by the time you get to 2017-18—where you think you're going to balance the budget; we know you're not—the debt is going to be \$340 billion. That's where we're going with you guys. And you're going to try to convince the public that somehow a pension plan that you bring out is going to be to their benefit. Nobody believes you on that. Nobody trusts you on that.

It's going to be an administrative nightmare duplicating—you're going to have the CPP on one hand with all of the administration involved in that, and then you're going to have this Ontario pension tax plan with a whole new group of administration, a whole new cadre of expenses and high administrative salaries—for what? So that the Ontario government can have their own little plan.

Given what this government has done—okay, so they brought out the health tax. In their first year in government they brought out the health tax. First they tried to call it a health premium, then the courts ruled that, no, no, the Liberals were not being honest with that. It's a tax. It's a payroll tax; the most regressive of all taxes, the most hurtful of all taxes to your economy. But what happened, Mr. Speaker? They never put the money to health. It's a health tax, but they never put the money to health.

I have some doubt, as other people do. As this pension tax pot grows and if we have a Liberal government in this province, will there be a safeguard to protect us from them raiding the piggy bank to spend it on their crazy programs that have wasted billions of dollars, like eHealth—\$2 billion; Ornge—a billion dollars; and the gas plant scandal—over a billion dollars.

1630

Ms. Sylvia Jones: And counting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And counting. Do you really want this government to be in charge of your money?

Now, in an RRSP, it is voluntary and recommended by all. I think people need to put more money into their RRSPs. We understand that, but if you're a young couple today—Jack Mintz wrote a really good article on this Liberal pension tax plan. If you're a young couple—for most people, the biggest asset they will ever acquire and own is their home. If you're going to be taking money out of people's pockets to put into your pension tax, rather than allowing them to put that toward building

equity in a home—that's the biggest single asset that most people will ever own, the equity in their home, and this is going to actually challenge their ability to put that money into their home.

Those same young people who could be putting money into an RRSP are now going to have a payroll tax, but there's no clear delineation of what's going to give you an exemption. They want to pretend that everything's going to be just fine, so they're saying that if you have a comparable plan, you and your employees won't have to make contributions to this tax plan, but they're not defining that in any clear way at all. It's leaning very heavily to, and it looks very much like, according to all of the reports we're getting, if you don't have a defined-benefit plan, you will not be exempt. If those young people are working for company ABC and that company has a modest pension plan in place for those employees, unless it is a defined-benefit plan, it is almost certain that this Liberal tax plan is going to rule that ineligible to qualify for an exemption.

What they tell you—I say to the folks out in TV land: Don't believe it for a second. They're going to try to convince you that this is going to be just fine. Every time you let the Liberals tell you that this is going to be just fine, you take it on the chin. You take it on the chin and you take it in the bank account. So when this company, then, is told, "Well, you don't qualify. You're going to have to tax your people at 1.9%, and you're going to have to put in 1.9 % into this plan," how do you go back to those employees and say, "Well, we're going to have to make adjustments to the plan we have"? That's not going to be easy. It's probably not going to happen. The employees are going to revolt. They'll say, "This is a deal that you've made with us. You can't go back on that just because the Liberal government put something in. No, we expect you to honour that plan." So then the cost even gets higher for those companies that have a plan in place that is ruled not to qualify for an exemption. It's really, really a difficult task for them to accomplish in a difficult economy.

And we know that Ontario's economy is not in great shape. Moody's has some real concerns about the credit rating here.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Ottawa-Orléans to come to order. You had an opportunity for debate. This gentleman, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, now has the opportunity for debate—fair and equal debate—so I would ask that you refrain. Thank you very much.

Back to the member.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Moody's has some real concerns about Ontario's economy, and a lot of debt-reporting agencies are not seeing enough progress at all on the Ontario economy, to get their own books in order, so we've got a negative credit watch here in Ontario. What does that tell you? It says that a government that is going to tell you what to

do with your money does one—blank, blank—poor job of managing theirs.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Oh, excuse me. That's not their money. That's your money, too, except you're responsible for the debts that they incur. I don't mind being responsible for the debts that I incur. I don't mind if I run up a debt and I'm responsible for it, but I am tired, like everybody else across this province, of being responsible for the debts that these people have run up. They've more than doubled the debt of Ontario in the time that they've been in office. In fact, today it's almost \$23,000 for every man, woman and child in this province, the debt that they're responsible for, but they just keep putting it on the heads of the people, the children and the ones who aren't even born yet. If you come into the world today in Ontario, you start out with a big debt.

Now they want to bring in a pension plan because they think it's good politics. This has nothing to do with a good policy about people's retirement. They have exaggerated everything and they have been misleading about the facts.

Here's one of the differences between an RRSP and this pension tax. Unless they're going to change the rules in their pension plan, which I hardly doubt, in most pension plans today, you can pay into it for a long, long time—40 years. If you're a single person with no dependents—even with dependents; you can be a single person with dependents—but if you don't have a spouse, there's no extension of that plan should you die. If you die, it goes into the pot. However, if you put money into an RRSP, that is your money to do with as you wish. You can bequeath it to anybody. Should you pass away, you can bequeath it to anybody. Whereas with a pension plan like this, if you're a person without a spouse and you pass away before you're eligible to collect, all those years that you've put money into that plan will be put into the box that goes to others. None of what you put in will go to anybody.

So I ask myself, and I ask you, I ask the members over there, if you're going to take 1.9%, would you not rather put it into an RRSP that you actually control and you don't have to put into the hands of this government? Oh, well, it's going to be third party. You think they won't have the legislative authority to raid that at some point if they want to, if they have to do it for fiscal reasons? That gang over there couldn't get their hands on it fast enough. They'll do anything for money. They sold the GM shares a couple of weeks ago, a month ago, whenever. It's lost money for the people of Ontario, but they're so starving for the cash that they had to sell the GM shares at a fire sale price so that they could pretend that they're doing something to alleviate the deficit here.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Yes, but you sold them at a loss. You lost money on what you paid for them, Glen. You lost money on the sale of the shares.

Another one of the interesting parts of this plan is one of the targets that they all talk about—and even the folks

over there don't talk about the people who have got money and couldn't give two hoots whether you bring out this plan or not but they all think it's a bad idea—but they talk about the poor, vulnerable people. If you're a person making \$20,000 a year and one that is getting the Guaranteed Income Supplement, this plan is going to hurt you.

Jack Mintz understands economics a whole lot more than anybody over there, and I'll just quote from his newspaper article: "Low-income seniors will be taxed on Ontario pension income as well as lose GIS payments, 50 cents on each dollar. For a senior with \$20,000 in income, barely above the measured poverty line, the Ontario pension plan will be reduced from \$2,848 to \$1,424 with the loss in GIS and a further \$584 by federal and provincial tax payments, leaving only \$740 to cover rent and food. While working, the person would pay the same payroll tax rate as others but would end up with a pretty lousy after-tax return on the asset."

1640

There you have it, from a guy who has made a lifetime out of studying economics and offering advice; and, interestingly enough, offering advice that many times this Liberal government has lapped up like a puppy when Purina is put into the dish. Just get right on it, folks, because anything that Jack Mintz was telling us, we thought the Liberals just thought it was great.

You see, Jack Mintz doesn't have a political agenda. I say to the minister: Everything you people do has a political agenda. You do nothing on the basis of good policy. It's all about politics. But Jack has no agenda here. He's only trying to tell people what is good or what is not good for them, and this pension tax plan is not good for them.

I haven't even got to the part—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Can I ask the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care that, if you care to engage in this particular debate, you would engage from your proper seat? Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She wants to be in that seat, Speaker. She's negotiating with the Premier's office, but it's not going well. I've got some inside information on that. Nevertheless, she's going to keep pitching to the corner office, I'm sure.

Last week, I met with folks in my riding who wanted to talk about this pension plan. They didn't come in to tell me what a great idea it was. They came in to ask me, "Is there anything that we can do to stop it?" I said, "Oh, I wish there was. But I believe in my heart of hearts that when it comes down to it, they're not even going to proceed with this. This is all about the political message and the little game that they're playing with"—who's the fancy boy in Ottawa there? Justin Trudeau. They're going to try to see if they can help with his political fairy tale.

That's what this is. It's a fairy tale. You're trying to convince people that if they jump on with this pension plan, at the end of the rainbow there's this pot of gold

and everybody is going to get a big share of it. Well, do you know what? Every time the Liberals talk about a pot of gold, it turns out to be fool's gold. Fool's gold is what it is, because you end up paying for it. The people pay for it, and there's no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow whatsoever. This pension tax scheme is going to be no exception to that rule.

A little bit more about what Mr. Mintz has to say about this:

"By exempting those employers with comparable plans—defined benefit and target plans—labour markets will be distorted in favour of unionized employers where such plans are typically found. Also, capital markets will be distorted in favour of financial firms that can provide comparable plans."

Again, you're favouring the businesses, the companies that already have plans in place, and you're attacking and penalizing those who don't have plans in place. In most cases, Mr. Speaker, they're the ones who struggle the most in our economy. You're going to take the businesses like the ones represented by the CFIB and other agencies, and you're going to put the biggest burden on them—those small ma-and-pa businesses in the country that create most of the jobs. But they don't make most of the money. You're going to put that tax on their backs.

Again, as Jack Mintz said, this is the wrong idea at the wrong time. This would be the wrong idea at any time, for so many reasons: the duplication of administration; the way that it is going to penalize the most vulnerable; the way that it is going to make it harder for young people to capitalize on the biggest asset they'll ever own, their home; the way that it's going to take people away from putting more money into an RRSP that they actually control because they're forced to put money into this government tax plan.

All of those reasons are reasons why we'll be voting against this bill and why people on the other side of the House should put policy before politics. I know it's not in your DNA, but do something to get it changed, because it's time that policy was what people were standing up for here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's always a pleasure, and indeed an honour, to follow the words of the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. If nothing else, I will always give my colleague credit for providing a very entertaining speech and ensuring that we all can learn from the flair for drama that my honourable colleague does certainly have.

But when it comes to the idea, I think what the member does bring to the table is that we should certainly critically evaluate whether the plan works or doesn't work. The way in which it's implemented—we should certainly look at that. But there is absolutely no question that our seniors in this province deserve and in fact have earned the right to retire with dignity. We know without any question that our seniors are struggling.

As it stands, there are numerous people—and I'm sure you have examples in all your ridings. There are seniors who are struggling right now to pay their bills. They are struggling to make ends meet. They are in dire circumstances, and the situation is only going to get worse. We owe it to them, out of respect, out of our moral obligation, to ensure that they can live a life of dignity after having given so much and after having sacrificed so much for us.

So the concept that the NDP championed many years earlier—and we're glad to see the government following with our idea, following through with it—is that we need to ensure that there is a way that our seniors can retire with dignity, that people have some security at the end of their employable years. We need to make sure that we do something about that.

Now, the way in which it's done, how it's done, looking at a plan that actually is effective, that actually delivers what we need to see, that our vulnerable people are actually supported—then let's look at it and discuss that. But there is no discussion that we need to do something to take care of our seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon. I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his always amusing and insightful remarks.

I want to echo some of the comments made by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. This Ontario pension plan to allow Ontarians to save for a comfortable and safe retirement is a plan which I heard from my residents that they are very interested in. They want a more secure retirement in the future, whether it's for themselves or for their children. They find that important. I find many of the remarks from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke frankly very puzzling. This is not a tax; it is a pension plan.

The Conservative approach to retirement income is over \$260 billion of unused RRSP room in this country that Canadians aren't using. TFSAs, which are great for those few who can afford to invest in them—tens of billions of dollars of unused room in those. Their latest approach, which is income-splitting to benefit the wealthiest Canadians—but not dealing with working-class Canadians, Ontarians, who need healthy retirement incomes.

This is what this plan is about. It is not a tax. It is a retirement pension plan for working Ontarians to ensure that they will have comfortable and safe, secure futures, and also to ensure that we have a strong economy in the future.

We have an aging population. There will be more Ontarians who are retired, who are not working, who will be depending upon this income to sustain them and sustain a healthy economy for this province in the future. I urge my friends across the chamber to get their federal counterparts to improve the Canada Pension Plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin–Caledon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Dufferin–Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Proudly Dufferin–Caledon.

I'm pleased to comment on my colleague from Renfrew, Pembroke—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nipissing.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —and one other—Nipissing. The Speaker never gets that far when he calls you out of order.

Listen, today's debate is all about trust. Can we have any faith, can we have any trust, that in giving the Liberal government our money to invest on our behalf, we believe they're actually going to do the right thing? I don't think we can. I think that history has proven that they are, with the greatest of respect, not good financial managers.

So who is not benefiting from this scheme? Certainly seniors who are already struggling to pay for skyrocketing hydro bills. They can't deal with the income and the expenses they already have, and we know from the energy initiatives and skyrocketing prices that it's only going to get worse.

1650

Who else is not going to benefit? The unemployed. We have over 300,000 people who have lost jobs in the manufacturing sector here in Ontario. Unemployed people are not going to benefit from the ORPP. Young people who have to leave the province of Ontario to actually find work are not going to benefit from the ORPP.

So you can look at your messaging and you can say that it's not a tax, but the reality is, if it is not optional, it is a tax. This will not be optional. It will not be optional for the employer and it will not be optional for the employee. It's a terrible way to encourage job creators to build wealth in Ontario and it's certainly a terrible way for people who want to build their employment here in Ontario. It's not going to work, and we have to stop it before it begins.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for Dufferin–Caledon and recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: During the address by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I ran back up to my office to get the Auditor General's report, because the Auditor General had issued an interesting report on the "Financial Services Commission of Ontario—Pension Plan and Financial Service Regulatory Oversight."

It says, "As of December 31, 2013, the pension incomes of approximately 3.4 million people in Ontario depended on defined-benefit pension plans, which had assets of \$420 billion. For the pension plans to pay benefits to members on retirement, the assets of the plan must be sufficient to meet the pension promise, also known as the pension liability."

But as of December 2013, "92% of defined-benefit plans were underfunded and did not have sufficient assets

to pay members their full pensions if the plans were wound up immediately.” The Auditor General says that “that percentage is up from 74% for the year ended December 31, 2005.... The 92% of defined-benefit plans that are currently underfunded have more than 2.8 million members.”

That really just scratches the surface. Ontario has a Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, as do other countries, but this problem is international. The Fraser Institute reports that in America, their fund operated at a \$27-billion deficit. In the United Kingdom “it did not have sufficient financial resources to pay existing levels of compensation and would not be fully funded until at least 2030.”

So we’re not, in Ontario, any different from what’s happening elsewhere when it comes to pensions. Maybe later in the afternoon I’ll tell you a little bit more about this, but I’m currently out of time. Thank you for this opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for his final comments.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I want to thank the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Dufferin–Caledon and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments.

I wanted to pick up a little bit on—there are so many things that you could talk about this for seven days and not cover all of the problems. But I wanted to talk a little bit about what my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon said, because the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton talked about struggling seniors, and he’s right. But why are they struggling? To a large degree, it’s because of the expenses that have been foisted upon them by this government.

Hydro, to people in my riding, has become something where they shudder when the mailman delivers the hydro bill, the electricity bill, because they just don’t know if they’re going to be able to pay it. You see, I have a lot of seniors in my riding who would have built their homes in the 1970s when you were being told, “Put in electric heat. That’s the way to go, those electric baseboards. You don’t have to worry about oil or gas or fuel. Just turn that dial up and let ‘er go, because it’s cheap.” But then—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. John Yakubuski: —this government brought in their Green Energy Act, which has sent those hydro bills through the roof, no pun intended. They’ve gone from the basement to the roof. I’ve got seniors who—

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. Stop the clock, please. I recognize the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to point out that—if you could request the

honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to speak to the issue. I don’t know what any of what he’s speaking to has to do with the pension plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. In my opinion, he was addressing the bill.

Back to the member, please.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you very much. If speaking about struggling seniors isn’t speaking about your issue, which you claim is the very reason you’re bringing this out, then maybe you should have been here for the debate.

Speaker, the cost that they have foisted upon the shoulders of seniors in this province is the reason that they are struggling. Don’t they get it? Don’t you understand it? Don’t you look in the mirror in the morning and ask yourself, “How can we continue to do this to Ontario’s seniors?”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I’m out of breath, listening.

Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: The Academy Awards were on this week, and he could have won one. It was very good.

I’m always pleased to stand up and have comments from Niagara Falls riding, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. I’m happy to rise today and talk about the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I spent most of my adult life fighting to make sure that the workers I was elected to represent had decent-paying jobs and good benefits. For a number of them, this included a good package for their retirement. During my 12 years as president of my local union, Unifor Local 199, I represented locals both with and without pension benefits.

I will also say that I went to Ottawa many times with my local union and with the Canadian Labour Congress to ask for increases to CPP, to make sure that the CPP is actually providing for our seniors and for those who have put in a lifetime of hard work. At the time, I sat down with a number of very talented MPs regarding this issue, which I am very passionate about.

Unfortunately, the current government seems less willing to increase the CPP now than they did then. I think this is because the government of the day sometimes has a hard time looking forward. However, if we come together here and create a proper and progressive Ontario pension plan, we can actually look forward to an Ontario of tomorrow and take care of those who will be retiring.

We have serious issues here around retirement savings in Ontario. In this province, two thirds of workers have no savings invested for their retirement. Even more concerning than this is the fact that only 28% of private sector workers have a workplace pension plan. These numbers highlight a series of issues: (1) that people are having such a hard time making ends meet that they can’t save for retirement, and (2) that when they retire, they’re going to have an even harder time living off the limited money available.

As the critic for small business and economic development, I am always looking forward to seeing what legislation will mean for the province of Ontario. We know, with the current state of retirement savings and CPP, that when workers retire, they won't be able to go out and shop. They may struggle to make ends meet, and they certainly won't have disposable cash to pump back into the many small businesses in the province of Ontario.

When we look into this pension plan, we need a plan that doesn't stop growth now and also plans for future growth and future economic activity. When people are getting to the age of 62 and 63, having worked their entire lives, they shouldn't have to begin panicking about how they're going to pay their bills. We want them to feel comfortable about their retirement savings and to know they have some insurance. These are the kinds of people who take their money, spend a little bit on themselves and begin to put some of that money back into the economy.

1700

Some of the people in this province are saying that we don't need a provincial pension program, that people should just save their own money. They're saying this even though we know that in this province, we have \$280 billion in unused contribution to RRSPs. I know a lot of people might not be listening, but—\$280 billion.

This isn't because the people of Ontario don't know how to save; it's because there are a lot of people struggling in this province. Out-of-control hydro bills, slow economic growth and low employment opportunities mean people just don't have excess money to save for their retirement. They're finding it hard to think about tomorrow when they can barely pay their hydro bills today.

Mr. Speaker, we had groups from Niagara sit down with me: the Knights of Columbus—the service clubs, like I mentioned last week when I stood up in the House—the Lions Clubs, the Legions. They're all saying their hydro bills are threatening to put them out of business. Manufacturers in my riding, like Genaire, Seneca and Brunner Manufacturing, are sitting down with me and saying exactly the same thing. These are workplaces that have 150 workers, that are paying a fair wage and a fair benefits package.

If businesses can't handle their hydro bills, think of what it does to seniors who are living alone in a poorly insulated house. Without any proper retirement savings, they have to choose between heating their home or being able to eat in the province of Ontario. Think about that. That's the kind of stuff that shouldn't be happening anywhere, let alone here in Ontario. It's also the kind of thing that this government can solve if it acts now.

There are ways that we, as a province, can help. We know that lowering hydro bills and helping people find decent work is something this government needs to prioritize. But this pension plan helps for future concerns. It asks our employers to invest a little in their workers, and our workers to invest a little in themselves, so that

when they retire, they can still play an active role in our economy.

Experts in this field, trade unions, workers mostly agree: The issue of retirement savings could and should be solved by increases to CPP. However, as we all know, our current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, refuses to even think about properly increasing CPP to meet the retirement needs of everyday Canadians from coast to coast to coast. He's far more interested in supporting his friends in the banking and insurance industries. Without the support of our Prime Minister, we're forced to improvise other ways to provide for our incredibly aging workforce.

The other things we've been hearing about: Old Age Security and CPP just aren't enough. Take, for example, seniors living off CPP in my riding, in Fort Erie. I've had senior citizens reach out to my constituency office. The stories are absolutely heartbreaking. They're on their own, with no transportation, very little money, struggling to do their best with what they have. They then need major dental work, surgery or dentures, but there just isn't enough money there for that.

We work with them and try to find a local or regional alternative, but the issue still remains: For people over 65, there just aren't enough funds available to spend on getting your teeth properly fixed. Our seniors, who built our province and our country, people who spent their lives giving back to their community, deserve more than that. This is a great reason why we need a proper and progressive pension plan. Where Old Age Security and the Canada Pension Plan fail to provide for our citizens a proper plan, we must fill in the gaps. That's what the New Democrats proposed in 2010 and that's the very same thing that was opposed by the Liberals in 2010.

With this new legislation, we need to make sure it properly addresses the shortcomings that exist today with regard to retirement savings. That has created this, a very short piece of legislation which sets out the framework for what may one day be a proper Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Of course, we New Democrats are surprised by this sudden desire for a pension plan. As I mentioned, you will remember that the NDP introduced a pension plan in 2010, which was a progressive pension plan, and yet it was opposed by many of the same Liberals sitting across from us today. It makes me wonder what has changed since then. As New Democrats, we support a proper, progressive pension plan which works for Ontarians. Of course, I fear this sudden support for a pension plan will see outside pressures cause this government to settle on a plan which is neither progressive nor all-encompassing.

When we introduced our pension plan in 2010, we of course had a proper consultation. It seems that at this stage, this government has had around a dozen consultation sessions with the public, which we hear were very hard to find and even harder to attend. There have been some traces of consultation, but for a government that is so dedicated to being open and transparent, it certainly wasn't easy for everyday Ontarians to know what was

going on in those consultations. But here we are today, with a promise of a proper plan to be implemented by 2017. We're told that it will be capped off at \$90,000 and that the bottom has not yet been decided.

Mr. Speaker, I want to stress this again: The only reason the province has to take on this sort of undertaking is because the federal Conservatives refuse to properly address CPP. When we begin to draft the framework for how this pension plan will come about and exactly what it looks like, we need to keep in mind that one day it may need to be transferable into the CPP, where the regulation belongs, making it truly a national and hopefully universal plan.

This is something that is important, which I invite everybody to listen to: The minimum—because they haven't set a minimum here in the province of Ontario—for CPP is \$3,500. Setting a minimum for the province here would not only help our lower-income citizens have some form of retirement coverage, but would sync with the national CPP level, making a future combining of the two a lot easier.

We must make sure that our low-income workers are allowed to participate in this pension plan. By mirroring the basic CPP exemption of \$3,500, we can include low-income workers here in Ontario. Matching the CPP at this level is good for stable membership and benefits for the plan and ensures widespread coverage to make sure people can live a life with dignity after they retire.

Also in this plan is a brief mention that self-employed individuals will not be able to participate under the current rules of the federal income tax. I think it's worth having a discussion with our federal counterparts to see if this is wise. It may be best to give our self-employed here in Ontario at least a chance to opt in if they'd like to. We know that people in this province are turning to their own businesses and small businesses these days, so if they want to be part of this and save for their retirement through a good pension plan, we should discuss having that option available to them.

1710

To go on, the point of making sure people have access to this plan is to make sure it's flexible when it comes to portability. Mr. Speaker, jobs today aren't like the jobs we had 30 and 40 years ago. Back then, we could find a good job with decent benefits, and could work in the same place until we retired. That is why we need to invest in our manufacturing sector.

I worked at General Motors, and I saw a lot of people start there at a young age, put in their time at the company and then retire with a good pension. Ask the young people out there today. They don't have the faith that they can find a job like that in today's market. The young people are constantly changing career streams and moving through employment opportunities. They say that they only stay at one job on average for four years. So this pension plan absolutely has to be transferable, and that needs to be an easy process. That's the only way we can draft a pension plan that works for young people today so they can properly save for tomorrow.

I'd like to take a moment to commend my colleague Jennifer French, MPP from Oshawa, for the excellent work she has done on the pension file. I know she has been out there, properly consulting with stakeholders and seeing what communities in Ontario are saying about this pension plan. I believe she has raised some valid concerns, which I share.

We noticed that this legislation was introduced on the same day as the insurance- and bank-appealing PRPP, which is very clearly a financial product that carries uncertainty for a lot of those saving for retirement. We notice there is a lot of pressure from the big insurance companies and the big banks to keep their packages available—retirement savings plans that net them 20% to 30% in profit.

Let's be clear about this: These profits come on the backs of the hard-working people of this province. Large banking and insurance schemes are netting massive returns at the expense of seniors in the province of Ontario. They know that a properly funded public pension plan would eat away at those profits, which only go to a very few, and they're definitely going to try and stop that.

We need to make sure that the people of this province come first and are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. We, as elected representatives, need to make sure that the people of this province have their needs met, over the desires of a few individuals in large banking and insurance corporations, when it comes to retirement savings.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing the rest of this legislation, beyond this framework, play out. I hope that this government will stay committed to a progressive plan that has coverage for Ontarians, and not bow to the pressure from those who want to use retirement money for profits for themselves.

We need to make sure that things like inflation protection remain in place.

As many of you know, I have a background in the automotive industry. Before the financial crisis hit, our pensions—that we bargained for with the Big Three—had a cost-of-living adjustment. After the financial crisis hit—which was caused by some large banks and insurers that hate the stable and public pensions—the COLA was discontinued. Workers' representatives have continued to fight hard to have that reinstated, because they understand how important it is.

If we want to make sure this plan is as progressive as it can be and as good as it can be, we need to make sure that inflation adjustments are included. This isn't something that should be promised and then removed when pressure comes from the financial industry. It needs to be a commitment that is followed through on by the government.

I hope this plan is reasonable and fair and restores dignity to the lives of those who have earned it. I hope it means that no one in this province has to fear turning 65. These people who retire have spent their lives being a productive member of our community. We owe it to

them to make sure that they enjoy their retirement affordably and with dignity.

On top of this, we have a whole generation of young workers who are going to need retirement savings once they reach that age as well, like I mentioned. These young people aren't working the same jobs that existed 30 and 40 years ago. As elected representatives, we have an obligation to create good-paying, decent jobs for them today and help them save for tomorrow. If we don't do this, we won't be investing in the future of this province. Equally important, our grandchildren and their grandchildren will leave the workforce with very little to look forward to. We can make sure that they continue to drive our economy and enjoy their lives by investing in their future today.

This is an issue we can't afford to ignore. We have a significant number of baby boomers working today who are going to have to retire soon. We're going to have a lot of people who need retirement assistance.

I look forward to the continued consultations regarding this plan and hope this House takes the opportunity to make the plan progressive. We have a shot to get this done right the first time. Let's get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'll take a couple of minutes to congratulate the member from Niagara Falls for speaking on Bill 56 so eloquently. The last thing he said was, "Let's get on with it and let's do it properly." I think we all want that. We want to see that Bill 56 reaches its conclusion in a way that is going to move ahead for the benefit of our future pensioners in Ontario.

Everything the member has said I'm going through with my own people. I represent one of the largest senior populations, people who didn't work in a place where there was a private company pension plan. I have to agree with the man: Those people today are struggling. They're struggling to go to the grocery store first, buy drugs or pay the bills. They're experiencing exactly what the member has said. When I talk to these seniors, they are saying that at least this will provide some affordability when they reach the age of 65. This is why we have introduced this particular bill here today.

It was a pleasure to hear the member saying that if the federal government were to listen to us—to all of us, because consultations are taking place, and Associate Minister Hunter here is, on a regular basis, doing consultation. The feds have been consulted. If they would come along and say, "You know what? It's a good idea. Let's combine it with the federal pension plan, old age plan. That would be the best thing to do"—but as the member has said, they refuse even to talk, even to look at it.

I think it's about time that we start this plan, but let's do it right. Let's get on so that this way, our people can start to save for a very dignified retirement age when it comes for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As we were mentioning earlier, we heard the negative comments of how destructive this tax will be from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We've heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We've heard from the Ministry of Finance itself. We've heard from McKinsey and Co. We've heard from Professor Ian Lee at Carleton's Sprott School of Business. We've heard from Jack Mintz.

Well, just today, we are now hearing brand new information from the insurance association. They have surveyed 401 different workplaces, and 78% of those surveyed would likely reduce their existing contribution levels if they are forced to participate in the pension tax. In addition, another 66% stated "they may consider eliminating their existing plans altogether" if this tax is enacted.

Speaker, here's the conclusion from the insurance association CEO, Frank Swedlove: "The Ontario government's proposal threatens the viability of existing plans and could negatively impact the retirement savings of millions of Ontario workers." He goes on to say, "It is clear that the proposal, as it now stands, not only undermines existing retirement savings but would force additional contributions on a large segment of the population who are already on track for retirement."

1720

Speaker, we'll add this documentation to the growing number of organizations, associations and small businesses throughout Ontario who would be penalized by this tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Nipissing and recognize the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for remembering my riding.

I'm pleased to respond to the member from Niagara Falls. I think it's important that we highlight the difference between the position of New Democrats and the position of the Conservatives.

The Conservatives are focusing on the actual implementation. What the member from Niagara Falls is talking about, and it's very clear, is that we need to do something to address the fact that seniors in his riding and ridings across Ontario are struggling to make ends meet. They are struggling because they don't have security in their retirement, and many people aren't able to save enough so that they can live with dignity when they retire. That's the issue.

The member from Niagara Falls very eloquently put that this is an issue that matters to the people of his riding. It's an issue that we champion as the NDP. It's an issue that we know we must address. There has to be something we do to address the issue that when people age in this province, there are simply not enough services for them, whether it's health care, whether it's having enough personal support workers to assist individuals who want to stay in their homes, who want to live in their homes with dignity, or whether it's having the security of knowing that you have a paycheque that will come to you

on a regular basis so that you can afford to live, so that you can afford the necessities of life, so that you can retire with dignity. These are issues that matter. These are issues that we must address.

We can't be sidetracked by the implementation. We need to first agree on the fact that we need to do something to ensure that people can retire with dignity, that they need to have a source of income when they retire. That's the first point.

Once we agree upon that, the way we implement that needs to be progressive, as the member from Niagara Falls stated. It has to be done in a way that's progressive, that doesn't leave vulnerable people behind, that ensures that they're taken care of. That is the only way that we would support a pension plan: something that ensures that it's actually protecting people and not exploiting people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank all of the members who spoke to this, in particular the members for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Niagara Falls.

As many of my colleagues mentioned, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke often delivers very amusing and entertaining debates and speeches, but what was less amusing was the fact that he got the facts wrong, either deliberately or unwittingly. I think this just diminishes debate.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I believe you can't correct someone else's record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I withdraw.

Just continuing on, the problem here has been a mischaracterization of what a tax is. I suspect that the member knows exactly what a tax is, but if he doesn't, he should check the definition, which very clearly says that a tax is something that's levied by a state. This is not money that is going to come to the province of Ontario's treasury. To mischaracterize it as a tax suggests a certain ideological desperation to oppose for the sake of opposing in the absence of having real issues to oppose. It's pretty sad, and I do wish that the official opposition—I have no problem with dissenting views, but I do have a problem when, in place of valid debate, mischaracterization is used to somehow further debate. I'm really sorry to have heard that.

I also want to thank the NDP for their support. I heard the member from Niagara Falls give a very thoughtful presentation, and I thank him for that. I was a little puzzled when he kept referring to the fact that the NDP introduced it first. The point is, when it mattered, the NDP did nothing. In the 2014 election, you had the chance. It was completely missing from your platform, but I'm glad to see that, finally, you are supportive of this, and I hope as we walk the talk, you will be with us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara Falls for his final comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't normally do this after I speak for 20 minutes, but to the MPP from the Liberal

side of the House, I will say that the reason why we brought it forward in 2010—and I thought I did say it in my speech—was that the Liberal Party voted against it in 2010. That's why it didn't end up going forward—just for your own information.

I will say thanks very much to everybody who stood and talked.

On the CPP: Listen, I've met with the federal government; I've met with MPPs. Without a doubt, that is the best way to make sure—we have a proven system in place that has enough money in it right now to last 75 years. That is the plan and we should absolutely go down that road. We either have to get a government that will do that or we have to convince the current government to do it. I have to say that we have a shot to get this thing done right, and let's get it done right the first time.

I want to talk about seniors because this is what this is about. This is about seniors, if they don't have a pension plan, living in poverty. Let's be honest: That could be one of our moms or dads; it could be our grandparents. We have to make sure: What is the cost to society when we have our seniors, who built our country, built our province—what's that cost to us? What does it cost to our health care system when, because they are living in poverty, they are spending more time in a hospital? They are having mental health issues. They are having diabetes. They don't have affordable housing. That's what this is about. This is about taking care of our seniors as we move forward. Who are those seniors going to be, by the way, in 30 or 40 years when this plan or one similar to it is in place? Who is it going to take care of? It's going to take care of our kids and our grandkids and our grandkids' grandkids. That's what this is about and that's why it's so important.

If you take a look at what's going on right here in Toronto, right here in the province of Ontario, we have people who are dying on our streets in one of the richest provinces in the country, and that makes no sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on this motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, we would like debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to stand and to talk about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Before I begin, I'd like say that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Newmarket-Aurora—who will do the two-minute reply—Burlington, Barrie, and Brampton—Springdale.

Speaker, a century ago living much past your retirement was a recipe for poverty. Unless you were wealthy or you could live with family, you had to hope that your savings and your assets lasted longer than you did. If not,

you died in poverty. Although Conservatives fought bitterly against it in the 1960s, Canadians gained an income supplement in the Canada Pension Plan.

Back then, men tended to retire at 65 and within five to 10 years most normally passed from this world into the next. Women could be expected, then, as now, to live a little longer than men.

Today, retired people live 15 to 20 years longer than they did in the mid-1960s, but the Canada Pension Plan has not kept pace with the times. Today, both men and women can expect to see their 80th birthday in the course of a normal and healthy life. Where, in Canada's centennial year of 1967, those Canadians older than our nation—which is to say, they had reached their 100th birthday—were so few and so far between that they were local and national celebrities, today, most seniors' residences and long-term-care homes have at least one and often several centenarians.

Our country is drifting back a century in time in how we treat our elderly. Our country has not thought through what will happen as the baby boom generation ages and becomes seniors. For every senior alive today, there will be two when most surviving baby boomers themselves move into their senior years. For every octogenarian, a person aged 80 or more, there will be three as our baby boomers move into their 80s. Our nation and our provinces are not ready for this.

1730

Our youth are pressed for employment in a post-industrial job market, squeezed by high house prices, and find it almost impossible to put away the important early money to generate the savings that they will need to live on at the end of a work life that will likely see them change careers about three times and change jobs every few years.

Employers in large companies have taken an eye-popping \$17 trillion out of the North American economy and stored it offshore in tax havens. It's time employers put some of what former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney called "dead money" back to work, investing in the future of the very people who create value for them. Working men and women need to adopt the imperative of budgeting a thin slice of their own income into a dignified life in their later years.

That's what a responsible reform of the Canada Pension Plan should have been about years ago. That's what enhancements to the Canada Pension Plan should be about today. If we had a responsible federal government in Ottawa, now or in the last generation, building a Canada Pension Plan for the 21st century, it would be done by now. But we have not had such a government in Ottawa.

That's why Ontario is building its Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Ontario needs our people to have a retirement plan that they can rely on. Seniors know that their ability to retire and to live in comfort and dignity is eroding each and every year. Young people know that they need a structure to enable them to save on a regular basis throughout their working careers. The same know-

ledge or service-related businesses, whose assets walk out the door every day and go home, know that they need a fair and level playing field to be able to assist their employees with a portable and professionally managed pension plan. Today they don't have it, Speaker. That's the reason why Ontario is introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: to provide that very level playing field to both employers and employees alike.

Speaker, I'm going to stop there and enable some of my colleagues to pick up this narrative and to talk about why and how the Ontario pension plan is so important in 21st-century Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's my pleasure to speak on this bill dealing with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, following in the footsteps of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I think that member really said it all and summed up quite nicely where we're at today with the pension plan.

I want to take a minute and just reflect on what I'm hearing in my constituency and what I heard in the previous election, while knocking on doors, meeting with seniors' groups, meeting with businesses. The seniors I met with understood that this isn't something that's necessarily going to help them. What they understand is that an ORPP is something that will help their grandchildren. They're very concerned about the future of their grandchildren. They see that good pensions that used to be provided by corporations are no longer there, and they're worried that their grandchildren just won't be able to live with dignity when they retire 40 years hence. They're very interested in seeing that move ahead.

I had an interesting conversation, I recall, when I was knocking on doors. It left me a bit flabbergasted, because my assumption was that so many business leaders would not be happy with this plan for whatever reason. I recall knocking on the door of a gentleman I know, a very prosperous businessman, and he said, "Listen, here's the deal. I'm looking at where my company is going to be 20 or 30 years down the road. If we have a large number of seniors living in poverty, they won't be able to afford the services and the products that my company and all the companies provide, and that will negatively impact the performance of my company in the future."

His take on it was that it's better that we pay a little bit now, or we will pay an awful lot later on. I thought that was a pretty wise comment for him to make.

I've had comments about the need to look at targeted pooled registered pension plans, as was introduced in the House by our Minister of Finance. When you look at what that means, what you're looking at is something that is complementary, but it's certainly not compatible with the pooled registered pension plan.

Interjection.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I would urge the members opposite, especially the member who is trying to interrupt, that we have this wonderful document that I'd be quite happy to share with him. It comes in both official languages, so

he can read it twice to make sure it's accurate. It's called the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: Key Design Questions. I'm quite happy to share that with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because I don't think, frankly, that he has read it. It answers a lot of questions that were raised earlier today, and should set at ease, I think, anyone's mind who reads that.

Through this legislation, Ontario is taking an important step to help millions of people save for their retirement. It's as simple as that. I hope that we move along with the retirement pension plan act, and I know that we'll continue to talk to chambers, businesspeople and seniors as we move this bill ahead. So I thank you, and I will leave the next few minutes for my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora. Now we turn it over to the member from Burlington.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I stand here today to express my support for Bill 56 and join my colleagues from Newmarket–Aurora and Mississauga–Streetsville in saluting the Associate Minister of Finance for her work and her leadership on this issue.

Ontario is taking an important step in helping millions of people save for their retirement by introducing the ORPP act. The reality is that the workforce of Ontario today and, in particular, younger Ontarians are not able to save enough to live comfortably in their retirement. Many spend large portions of their income on the bare necessities, quite often leaving them without enough to save for their retirement.

All Ontarians indeed—I'm sure we would all agree on this—deserve to have stability in their golden years, and helping to provide a predictable and meaningful source of retirement income is one way in which we can accomplish this. Indeed, ensuring that Ontarians retire not in poverty but in dignity is not only their right but our responsibility.

I know there are many forward-thinking, socially responsible business owners in Ontario who agree with this. In my riding of Burlington, I've had the pleasure of meeting several business owners who support the need for enhanced pensions. In October, I had the pleasure of welcoming the Associate Minister of Finance to Burlington to hear from local business owners and community leaders.

One such business owner employs 65 men and women and doesn't presently have an employer-sponsored pension plan. It's an idea he has been exploring over the past few years and, in fact, he is currently offering a highly accelerated pension option to his employees nearing retirement. He has even lobbied his federal member of Parliament for an enhanced CPP—what a concept—a pension system he believes should be increased dramatically. He was thrilled when our government announced its intention to introduce an Ontario solution to the impending pension crisis. Whether through CPP, which Prime Minister Harper has made abundantly clear he has no plans to enhance, or through the ORPP, my constituent is not concerned about the

impact it will have on the economy or businesses like his. Indeed, his preference is to safeguard the lives and well-being of his employees. This business owner believes that without a meaningful pension plan, business will have to pay down the road at any rate, and I agree. He believes in making an effective, efficient, transparent and fair pension for all, and that a defined-benefit plan is a social necessity for a country like Canada.

The conversation is changing about the ORPP, and increasingly Ontarians are coming around to the fact that it is indeed a benefit, rather than a tax on business, as some would have us believe.

1740

As a former vice-president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, I'm pleased to note that the implementation plan for the ORPP will see it phased in in 2017 as EI premiums are reduced, cushioning its impact.

For previous generations, a defined pension plan was the norm. That's not the case today, and we can't afford to have a generation of seniors who can't afford to live. Our social safety net and our children and grandchildren will bear the cost down the road.

Finally, from an economic perspective, higher incomes among retirees mean stable consumption in the future and decreased reliance on publicly funded social services, improving job and economic growth in the long term.

In closing, everyone needs to plan for retirement decades before they reach their golden years, and that includes government too. That is why we need an Ontario pension plan that starts saving today for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you to the member from Burlington. Now I recognize the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: The official opposition across the hall here is basically doing a "sky is falling" attitude about this bill. They've convinced small businesses that this is a job-killing payroll tax. Let's be clear: This is not a tax. The ORPP is a vehicle to help individuals save for retirement. It's also an investment in the long-term health of our economy. We know that people are not saving enough for retirement. If this trend continues, individuals will face lower standards of living, their consumption in retirement may decrease, and they may rely more on publicly funded programs. That's not good for people, that's not good for business and it's not good for the economy.

The ORPP would help correct the problem we see emerging on the horizon. What David Dodge has told us is that the long-term benefits would outweigh the short-term costs. That's good for all business, including small business.

In the meantime, to help businesses adjust, the ORPP would be implemented in 2017 to coincide with the expected reductions in employment insurance premiums. In addition, enrolment would occur in stages, beginning with the largest employers, and contributions would be phased in over two years.

Employees who feel more secure about their own futures tend to be more productive. More than that, we

know that businesses care about the well-being of the people who work for them. The ORPP would be a cost-effective way of helping give workers a secure retirement floor that they can rely on so that all of us can rest assured about our collective futures.

We say that it will help our children. My oldest child will be 46 at the end of April, so she would be 86 when she gets it. However, she will receive it. My grandchildren are lucky enough to have—both of them have two degrees from Queen's, and I hope they don't need extra money, but I feel that, the way that things are going, the costs and everything, they may need it too.

I'm doing this because I'm a grandmother and also an educator, and I know how much people in Ontario need this to happen. I urge you to support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Barrie, and I recognize now the member from Brampton—Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm happy to stand in the House today to talk about the ORPP. Ontario is taking an important step in helping millions of Ontarians to save for their retirement by introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. This legislation will help create a savings tool for the people of this province designed to give people a secure future that they can rely on.

I'm very proud of the fact that many times we've discussed that our associate minister has been out consulting. I look forward to her upcoming visit to Brampton so that we can continue to consult with our constituents.

The legislation, if passed, would require the establishment of the ORPP by January 1, 2017, and set out the basic parameters of the plan, including equal contributions from employees and employers capped at 1.9% each on an employee's annual earnings up to \$90,000. Contributions will be invested by an organization at arm's length from the government. Benefits will be indexed to inflation to provide a predictable source of retirement income for life.

Economists like the former governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, have told us that this will be good for the economy in the future and in the long run. Higher incomes among retirees means stable consumption in the future and decreased reliance on publicly funded social services, improving jobs and economic growth in the long term.

We want to ensure that we're creating the best plan for Ontarians. We want to ensure that we're doing the right thing.

We're also committed to continuing to engage Ontarians in the plan. In the coming weeks, we'll be releasing a consultation paper that outlines the government's work on some key plan designs and details of the ORPP. Plan design details are still being developed, and we look forward to receiving people's input.

This is about balancing the needs of today's workforce against the needs of the aging population. It is about securing our collective future so we can all rest assured. That's why we're taking action now to ensure a strong economy for the future.

The legislation provides further details about participation and benefits. More specifically, it will give authority to the government to request and collect some information, including personal information, for the purpose of establishing the plan.

As the next step, we'll be releasing a consultation paper, as I said earlier, so that we can better understand the plan and Ontarians can better understand the plan.

This government has taken a huge step in moving forward to helping ensure a secure retirement future for Ontarians, in the absence, of course, of leadership at the federal level. We're going to take action by moving forward with the ORPP. Between now and 2017, we'll finalize the details of the plan, introduce necessary legislation and put other measures in place to administer the ORPP.

Let's be clear: This is not a tax. The ORPP is a vehicle to help individuals in their retirement. It's also an investment in the long-term health of our economy. We know that people are not saving enough for their retirement. If this trend continues, individuals will face lower standards of living. Their consumption in retirement may decrease, and they may rely more on publicly funded programs. That's not good for the people, that's not good for business, and that's not good for the economy. The ORPP would help correct a problem we see emerging on the horizon. That's good for all businesses, including small businesses. That is why we are committed to putting forth the ORPP. We're committed to the people of Ontario and to helping them save for their retirement.

It's important to remember that the ORPP is not being introduced in isolation. This government is continuing to work to balance the budget and create a dynamic and innovative business climate. In that sense, this plan offers assistance to all small businesses.

We know that the cost and the administrative burden of some workplace pension plans can make it difficult for many small employers to provide them to their employees. What the ORPP could do is allow these employers to compete with large employers for talent and retention by being able to offer employees a retirement benefit program. That is why I stand here to support the ORPP.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now time for questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It never ceases to amaze me—some of them disappoint me, and some of them just amaze me. The Liberals have set many records in their time in office.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mostly scandals.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've set records for deficits. They've set records for the accumulated debt in the province of Ontario. They've set records for scandals.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: OPP investigations.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've set records for the number of OPP investigations going on simultaneously. Today, they set a record for the most members to speak during one 20-minute segment. It is speed-debating in the Ontario Legislature.

I see what's coming. I look at good old Eddie down there underneath the press. He's got a plan in place. They're cooking up something to throw on the burner here to try to catch the Tories off guard. They caught us this morning, but they won't catch us tomorrow morning; I'll tell you that. We see what's happening here. They want to get all the members on record as having supported this plan.

But what I don't understand—and my friend from Niagara Falls brought this up. He said that we don't support this—I'm saying we don't support this, but the member from Niagara Falls certainly does. But he brought up a legitimate question: Why in 2010, when the third party was in favour of bringing in an Ontario pension plan, did the Liberals say, “No, no, no, no way! It's a bad idea, bad idea.” Dwight Duncan said, “Are you crazy? Can't have it. It would be another tax on payrolls.”

But now, because they feel that it's a good political move for them—everything they do is based on whether or not they believe it's a good political move. It's a bad political move, and I believe it will be shown in 2018. But it's also a bad policy move, and that's what they should be paying attention to.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I believe it was Tommy Douglas who said that we should want for others what we wish for ourselves, or something along those lines.

I know that Ontarians think we have a pension plan as members of provincial Parliament, but in fact, we do not. We do not have a defined benefit pension plan because Premier Mike Harris got rid of it. I have to say, if we want for others what we wish for ourselves—in my conversations with all parties, we all wished we had a defined benefit pension plan right here. I would say to my colleagues to the right, what you wish for yourselves, you should want for others. That's in essence what we're talking about here. Yes, it would be good to have a Prime Minister who was onside on an enhanced CPP. With any luck at all, in 2015, when Thomas Mulcair becomes Prime Minister, we'll have that enhanced CPP.

I would say to my friends on the right: Don't worry too much. This may never see the light of day, which is a fear of ours in the New Democratic Party, since we introduced it in 2010, and it's taken five years to get this far.

Having said that, let's look ahead. Let's move on something. Quite frankly, even with this plan and the CPP, you are still going to be living way below the poverty line as a senior.

On the other hand, my colleagues to the right seem to think that banks and insurance companies are the way to go and that putting millions aside to get the same benefit is something attainable by all. I would respectfully disagree again. What we want for ourselves, we should also wish for others.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 56 this afternoon. I've listened to the views of the opposition parties, and obviously they're entitled to those views. I certainly appreciate the support of the third party. The Conservative Party has put forward its view, and it's not one I share. I would say that it's not one that is shared by the vast majority of people around the province of Ontario, and I don't think it's not shared in a partisan way. I think what we have is an expectation in this province that the people who came before us built a pretty decent standard of living for us. We expect that to continue on into the future.

Part of that—and certainly all three parties were involved in this at the federal level—was the introduction of the CPP. It's something we've come to rely on as a society. When we get to the retirement years, it's something that we like to think is there.

Over the years, for whatever reason, there has been a sense that what is provided by the CPP is simply not enough to see a person through those retirement years after they choose to retire and that something else was necessary.

It certainly is the view of this side of the House that the preferred option obviously would be the most simple option. The easiest way of doing this would be an enhancement to the CPP. I think if we were to see that happen, if that was put forward in a serious way at the federal level of government, you'd see this side of the House say, “Go. Move on that.” That's what we really want to see happen.

However, in the absence of any action at the federal level—ordinary people in the province of Ontario are retiring each and every day. They're looking forward to a future that's got some retirement income in it that's going to allow them to live out those retirement years in a decent way. Without either an enhancement to the CPP or the plan we have before us in place, these people are not going to enjoy that retirement they planned on.

What I'm saying today is that this is a way of moving forward. Should there be a change of heart by any one of the parties at the federal level, I think that would be the preferred route. What we have before us is worth supporting today, though, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We hear a lot of innuendo and a lot of discussion on the other side.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Rhetoric.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is a lot of rhetoric, I must say.

Let's look at the facts, then. Let's look at the McKinsey and Co. facts that have come out just this month, only two weeks ago. What McKinsey and Co., one of the most respected consulting firms worldwide, has said is, “The vast majority of Canadians are saving enough for retirement to ensure a standard of living similar to their pre-retirement lifestyle....”

Speaker, everybody deserves to retire with dignity. I don't think there's anybody in this House that would disagree with that. But McKinsey says that a financial survey of 12,000 households shows that 83% of

Canadians are indeed on track to maintain their standard of living after they stop working.

“McKinsey principal Fabrice Morin said the findings suggest many people are worrying needlessly....”

He also said that “if even 30% of the value of peoples’ homes had been included as a financial asset, the proportion of Canadians with adequate savings for retirement would climb to 87%.”

The survey also found that “93% of low-income workers will be able to have similar consumption in retirement because government pension programs”—already in existence, including the GIS—“provide a minimum level of income that matches their pre-retirement lifestyle.”

Speaker, if the issue is, as McKinsey and Co. says, that 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their standard, then let’s have a program focused on the 17% who are not there. As opposed to imposing a financial burden on the whole economy, bringing it all down, let’s give help to the group that needs help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back over for final wrap-up and final comments.

Mr. Chris Ballard: It gives me pleasure to make a few final comments on this bill.

I think everyone—well, almost everyone—agrees that the undersaving problem is real. There is a gap between what people will need and what they have. Our current system, while strong, simply is not filling that gap. CPP, in future, is not strong enough.

In response, our government has taken a major step forward in strengthening our retirement income system.

If passed, this legislation will help create a savings vehicle for the people of this province that would help give them the secure retirement future that they desire and they deserve.

The government is committed to addressing the retirement needs of a 21st-century workforce. One of the aspects that is so good about this bill is its portability across participating employers. That will respond to the needs of an increasingly mobile workforce, one that we know will work their way through a number of jobs and a number of positions in their working life.

We’re committed to continued engagement leading up to the implementation, if this bill is passed, for January 2017. Ongoing dialogue will be critical throughout the process.

To be clear, our preferred option is still the CPP enhancement, something this government has advocated for since 2010. Unfortunately, the federal government has unilaterally shut down discussions on that issue.

We know the cost of inaction is far too high. If the federal government is unwilling to step up, this government is prepared to take action to tackle the undersaving issue.

This is about securing our collective futures so that we can all retire with dignity. We’re taking action now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing as it is now almost 6 o’clock, this Legislature will adjourn until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwalá, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mileczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

Élection partielle à Sudbury / By-election in Sudbury

M. Michael Mantha.....	2319
L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2319

Energy policies

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	2319
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	2319

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2320
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2320

Correction of record

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2320
-------------------------------	------

Correction of record

Hon. Liz Sandals	2320
------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer), 2015, Bill 31, Mr. Del Duca / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le transport (accroître la sécurité routière en Ontario), projet de loi 31, M. Del Duca
Second reading agreed to

2321
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....2321

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Michael Chan	2321
Mr. Arthur Potts	2321
Mr. Granville Anderson	2321
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2321

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Rural health services

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2321
----------------------------	------

Alzheimer's disease

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	2321
-------------------------	------

Chris Williams and Craig Mann

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2322
--------------------------------	------

Canadian National Institute for the Blind

Mr. Michael Harris.....	2322
-------------------------	------

Buy local

Mr. Wayne Gates	2322
-----------------------	------

Della Taylor

Mr. Chris Ballard	2322
-------------------------	------

Belleville Downtown DocFest

Mr. Todd Smith	2323
----------------------	------

Safehaven

Mrs. Cristina Martins	2323
-----------------------------	------

Domestic violence

Ms. Daiene Vernile	2323
--------------------------	------

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2324
-------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Hon. Mitzie Hunter	2324
--------------------------	------

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2324
Report deemed adopted	2324

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Black History Month

Hon. Michael Chan	2324
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	2325
Ms. Laurie Scott	2325
Ms. Catherine Fife	2326
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2327

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Energy policies

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	2327
------------------------	------

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2327
------------------------	------

Legal aid

Mr. Bob Delaney	2327
-----------------------	------

Property taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	2327
-----------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	2328
-------------------------	------

Student safety

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry.....	2328
---------------------------	------

Trespassing

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....	2328
-----------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mme France Gélinas	2328
--------------------------	------

Hispanic Heritage Month

Ms. Eleanor McMahon.....	2329
--------------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	2329
------------------------	------

First responders

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 2329

Hispanic Heritage Month

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry 2329

Hydro rates

Mr. Todd Smith 2329

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR**Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015, Bill 56,**

**Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2015 sur le Régime de retraite
de la province de l'Ontario, projet de loi 56,**

Mme Hunter

Mr. Arthur Potts 2330

Mme Marie-France Lalonde 2331

Mr. Han Dong 2331

Mr. Victor Fedeli 2332

Mr. Percy Hatfield 2333

Mr. Bas Balkissoon 2333

Mr. Todd Smith 2333

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde 2333

Mr. John Yakabuski 2334

Mr. Jagmeet Singh 2336

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn 2337

Ms. Sylvia Jones 2337

Mr. Percy Hatfield 2337

Mr. John Yakabuski 2338

Mr. Wayne Gates 2338

Hon. Mario Sergio 2341

Mr. Victor Fedeli 2341

Mr. Jagmeet Singh 2341

Hon. Dipika Damerla 2342

Mr. Wayne Gates 2342

Mr. Bob Delaney 2342

Mr. Chris Ballard 2343

Ms. Eleanor McMahon 2344

Ms. Ann Hoggarth 2344

Ms. Harinder Malhi 2345

Mr. John Yakabuski 2345

Ms. Cheri DiNovo 2346

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn 2346

Mr. Victor Fedeli 2346

Mr. Chris Ballard 2347

Second reading debate deemed adjourned 2347

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 24 February 2015 / Mardi 24 février 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer), 2015, Bill 31, Mr. Del Duca / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le transport (accroître la sécurité routière en Ontario), projet de loi 31, M. Del Duca	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2299
Hon. Mario Sergio	2299
Mr. John Yakabuski	2299
Mme France Gélinas	2300
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2300
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2300
Hon. Helena Jaczek	2302
Mr. John Yakabuski	2302
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	2302
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2303
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2303
Hon. James J. Bradley	2303
Second reading vote deferred	2305
Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2015, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2015 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal	
Mr. Mike Colle	2305
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2306
Hon. Mario Sergio	2307
Ms. Laurie Scott	2308
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2308
Mr. Arthur Potts	2308
Mr. Todd Smith	2309
Mr. Mike Colle	2309
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2309

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Steve Clark	2309
Hon. Michael Chan	2309
Mrs. Julia Munro	2309
Hon. Mario Sergio	2309
Mr. Todd Smith	2310
Mr. Chris Ballard	2310
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2310
Hon. Helena Jaczek	2310
Mr. Michael Harris	2310

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Curriculum	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	2310
Hon. Liz Sandals	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Steve Clark	2310
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2310
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2310
Senior citizens	
Mr. Han Dong	2310
Hon. Mario Sergio	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Michael Harris	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2310
Services for the developmentally disabled	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2310
Hon. Helena Jaczek	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Steve Clark	2310
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2310
Élection partielle à Sudbury / By-election in Sudbury	
Mme France Gélinas	2310
L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310
Invasive species	
Mrs. Cristina Martins	2310
Hon. Bill Mauro	2310
By-election in Sudbury	
Mrs. Julia Munro	2310
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2310

Continued on inside back cover

A20N
X1
-D23



No. 48

N° 48

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 25 February 2015

Mercredi 25 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRIQUE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is, of course, an honour as always to rise in the House to join the debate on a really important issue that we're talking about this morning. G40 is the Agriculture Insurance Act, second reading, that amends the Crop Insurance Act.

Speaker, as many members know, I come from the riding of Essex, which is one of the pre-eminent hotbeds for agricultural production in Ontario. We're very, very proud of our history in Essex county, and many would know the incredible variety of agricultural products that come out of the county. Of course, we would all know Leamington and Kingsville, home of the largest amount of vegetables grown under glass in our greenhouse industry. We're very proud; it's a very important economic generator for our region, one that continues to innovate and continues to grow—no pun intended. They certainly are a large portion of our regional economy and provide a tangible economic benefit to our area.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If only they had access to more hydro power. I'll get into that, for my friend from Windsor—Tecumseh, who also knows the importance of agricultural production.

Today we're talking about expanding this act. G40 expands the Crop Insurance Act to cover other products. Currently, the Crop Insurance Act covers about 90 products in the province, including grains, oilseeds, fruits,

vegetables, forage—hay—honey and tobacco, but it does not cover livestock or maple products. That's what we're talking about today: expanding that coverage to those segments of agriculture, which are, of course, important.

We know that we have a good base of livestock production and a footprint in the province, and it's growing as well. As the recognition of locally grown food and the need and demand for locally grown food increases, these types of industries are going to also increase.

That isn't to say that they aren't facing, and won't face, tremendous challenges, as we've seen in other jurisdictions. I would point to Alberta, which several years ago faced a massive BSE crisis that really decimated their industry. We need to be cognizant of that, and I think this is what this bill does. It is an enabling piece of legislation that allows the government to ultimately bring those types of products into the fold under the Agriculture Insurance Act, and provide those producers with some coverage—some support and protection—should things go awry.

We know there are challenges, not only through the BSE-type viruses or illnesses, but also, of course, environmental challenges that farmers face each and every day and each and every season that are outside of their control. That's why these types of mechanisms are incredibly important. I would say they are vitally important, not only to our economy but, even more importantly, to our national security. That is how absolutely important this industry is. We're talking about food security. We're talking about food sovereignty and the ability to rely on your own production, domestic production; and food safety, to be able to ensure that the products we all eat each and every day are safe and produced with a good amount of oversight, protection and safety.

We know that farmers do that. We know that they put the highest standards on every one of the products that leaves the farm gate. However, we have to remain diligent in terms of ensuring that those regulations are not so burdensome that it puts them out of business, but also balances the need and the demand for food awareness, food safety and, really, origin: Where is it coming from?

I would suspect, and I would argue, that if you canvass the majority of Canadians and certainly Ontarians, we're more likely, more apt, to choose a product that is grown and made here in Ontario rather than one that is made somewhere else in the world, because we know our farmers—they're our friends; they're our neighbours—and we know the value they place on their products and their industry.

I'm sure that members of the House have heard the phrase, "If you ate today, thank a farmer." And of course,

if you are a farmer, thank you, because we know that farmers feed cities; farmers feed communities. They are not simply that; they provide a vital component to our rural identity, something that has increasingly been diminished under this Liberal government, frankly.

I live in rural Ontario. I drive the county roads. When I look down the concessions and see a large acreage, a large farm that's been owned from generation to generation, and I know the challenges those farmers are facing and I know they are potentially deciding to maybe sell the farm and I also know that their children aren't likely to take it up because of those challenges, because of the burdens that have been placed on farmers, that puts our industry in peril and puts our food security in peril—back to the nature of food sovereignty and our ability to produce our own food.

Imagine if we lost the ability, not only to produce our own food but to control it, and the knowledge that it takes to produce food. It's incredible. Farmers are no longer simply planting seed and waiting for something to pop out of the ground. If you're a farmer, you are an environmentalist, because you have to be a steward of your land; you have to recognize the challenges in keeping up your land. You are an engineer, because you've got to fix tractors—you're a mechanic. You're an economist, because you've got to watch the markets. You are a whole host of professions and knowledge that it takes to be a farmer. Imagine what type of position we would be in, as a country and certainly as a province, if we lost that knowledge base. That's why I would submit that agricultural production in the province is our number one important industry, not only because of the economic value, but because of that security value.

There's so much more we could be doing, so much more that we have to do, so much more that farmers and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union have told us we could be doing, one of which is developing a provincial agriculture strategy, not simply an ad hoc way or an ad hoc approach to how we deal with agriculture. It's a piecemeal approach. When things go bad, we try to find some money here and try to develop a program here to be able to buffer that production. It can't work. It's not sustainable, and it doesn't give the confidence to the industry that we take agriculture seriously.

Imagine if we had, in this province, an actual provincial agriculture strategy, something that would address the rising cost of hydro, the skyrocketing cost of hydro that many of our producers face. Imagine if we addressed that issue for them, so that they could feel confident in going forward and growing forward.

0910

Imagine if we reviewed the barriers to trade, being access to market but also the imbalance that we face under some of our trading agreements that allow foreign food to be dumped into Ontario, into Canada. Imagine if we said, "Whoa, we're not going to do that any longer. We're going to create a level playing field for our agricultural producers," because we know their costs for in-

puts are incredibly higher than some other regions of the planet. Imagine if we actually took agricultural production seriously.

Investing in access to natural gas: There is a consensus throughout the agriculture industry in Ontario that they need more access to natural gas and the ability to use it, given that it is certainly more affordable these days than hydro.

Speaker, Rural Ontario revolves around agricultural production and all of the effects of this government when it comes to rural Ontario. I'm talking about the closure of rural and small schools, the closure of rural hospitals; I would point to the OB unit being threatened to be closed at Leamington general hospital. Those affect the decision-making process of our farmers, whether they continue to produce in those regions or whether they close up shop completely and maybe sell their land and their business to a foreign entity. Again, that points back to a risk of our national sovereignty in that we lose that domestic production.

Imagine if we had a provincial agriculture program that actually had procurement policy built into it, that said, "We are the government of Ontario. We have the largest buying capacity in the province." Should we not identify locally provincially grown and produced food and use it in our provincial entities—schools, hospitals, prisons? Imagine we had a threshold, let's say, of 20% where we mandated that we bought Ontario-grown food. We all hear the catchphrases; we all hear "Good things grown in Ontario." But that's really simply all it is: a really nice commercial. We're not speaking those words. We are not working towards actually supporting and enhancing and protecting agricultural production.

This, again, is enabling legislation. It calls for the government to be able to bring other products—livestock products and maple syrup, I would imagine—into the fold under the provisions of the Crop Insurance Act. It actually changes the name of the Crop Insurance Act to the Agricultural Products Insurance Act—a subtle change. I guess it's a little bit more broad in its scope, and I think that's a good thing. It definitely recognizes the importance of all of our products that are made in Ontario related to agriculture.

However, it does not tie any dollar figure to the insurance. Currently, I think it's roughly \$100 million that is within the envelope of the Crop Insurance Act. So let's say, Speaker, that grains and oilseeds have a terrible year across the province, your soy and your canola and your corn. Imagine that they have a terrible drought year, let's say due to the effects of climate change, because that is a reality that farmers know all too well, that the drastic change in weather and the uncertainty and volatility of weather is affecting their crop production and their yields. Let's say that happens, as it did in 2006, as it did in 2005, and farmers are not able to buffer that. Just those two entities alone, the grains and oilseeds commodities sector, would eat up the \$100 million. So bring in other products that may be facing the same challenges and your bank is empty. At a time when we know that OMAFRA's

budget is being cut by, I believe, 6% every year—I guess this was a mandate under the former Minister of Agriculture, who also happened to be at the time the Premier of the province. She challenged farmers to create 120,000 new jobs and double the sector's growth rate by 2020, at the same time cutting OMAFRA's budget by 6%.

I don't know who the economist is who is giving the government that type of advice, but it doesn't make sense to us here in the NDP. We would say that if you're going to challenge an industry to grow and to innovate, as they do currently, then you've got to be there in terms of support. You should actually make a commitment and you should identify the value in protecting agriculture. They haven't done that. That's a terrible signal. "We want you to grow, but we're going to cut back. We're going to cut back on local offices in areas like Essex," where we had historically, for decades and decades, a wonderful OMAFRA office that serviced local farmers. That doesn't exist anymore. Farmers have to access their support through OMAFRA from who knows where, but definitely outside of Essex county. That goes against how rural Ontario operates, Speaker.

Obviously, the government doesn't really understand rural Ontario. We like to talk to people, we like to sit down and understand and work out the nuances, and it's hard to do that over the Internet in a form letter or a form application. We need to know—there are, again, specific nuances and idiosyncrasies of each and every farm that don't simply apply. They aren't recognizing that in their slashing of the OMAFRA budget, but yet they're challenging farmers to grow more—and they will.

Farmers have always been innovative. They do so each and every day. As I said, they're not only farmers but they are engineers. They're data collectors, they are on the cutting edge of science; they understand GPS, they understand best practices and they implement them into their operations. However, they're not being led, of course, by this government. They're taking it on their own initiative to improve their product, improve their quality and safety, and I know that they will continue to do that and play a vital part.

It's a given that New Democrats support this provision to bring in livestock under the fold of the Crop Insurance Act, to ensure that should they face any challenges, we protect that industry; protect the nature and the important history of the industry. However, there is so much more that can be done in the realm of agriculture.

Imagine, Speaker—it's a government that touts the importance of rural Ontario. They say a lot of great things, but to really show some initiative, I would throw that challenge right back at the Premier, right back at the Minister of Rural Affairs: Create a standing committee on agriculture. If you actually think that farming and agricultural production in this province is as important, as I do, as we do as New Democrats, create a standing committee so that we can discuss all of these issues that I brought up today so that we can continue—we can show our agricultural producers out there that we actually care, we take them seriously and we're going to have a specif-

ic forum for them to voice their concerns, for them to play a role in discussing legislative initiatives. Why not do that? It's a simple mechanism. It wouldn't cost that much money but would actually give voice to these concerns, not in the ad hoc way in which this government treats our farmers: piecemeal; here and there, when things happen. No, take it seriously. Create a standing committee and make it happen.

Also stop attacking rural Ontario for the sake of other areas of the province. You're pitting rural Ontario against one another when it comes to a whole host of issues. You don't understand the idiosyncrasies of rural Ontario. The need for small schools: Yes, they may not be up to the same capacity as some urban areas but they are the heartbeat of those communities. They are what families and generations have relied on. The school might not look that pretty. It might not have a nice sheen on it—as the government likes to do and cut ribbons—but sometimes they're historic. They are places in which families have gathered for generations to play a role in their kids' education, to gather to support and celebrate their communities, and you're tearing that out of rural Ontario. It's a shame.

Then we close OB units; we close obstetrics and gynecology units in small rural hospitals, as they are in Leamington. What type of a signal does that send? There's no longer an area for to you have your child in this geographic location, so would you not think that that's going to affect the enrolment of small rural schools? They're directly connected. But the government doesn't see that because, again, they don't understand the needs—they don't understand rural Ontario, point final.

0920

But I would say that New Democrats do. That's why we certainly support our farmers. We look forward to working with them in concert, and we appreciate and value what they do for us each and every day. Again, when I drive down those rural roads in my beautiful riding of Essex county and I look at these big plots of land, I don't just see a commodity being grown. I see a small business. I see a family. I see a hub of community and connectivity. We know. We see the names, the namesakes on the barns, a proud history of agricultural production. That, without the right attention and without the right priority, could be lost. And it is at threat of being lost.

I hope the government understands the important nature of agricultural production. I hope they start to take it seriously, stop doing the ad hoc thing and actually value and implement legislation that adds value and supports the vital nature of agricultural production in this province.

Speaker, thank you very much and I thank the members for their attention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the member for Essex's comments on Bill 40, the agricultural crop act and the revisions we are making to it. Most certainly, this is going to be enabling legis-

lation which will allow us to expand the suite of products which will be under the Crop Insurance Act, and we're very, very proud of that direction forward. It helps level the playing field for Ontario farmers with all other farmers across the country and it's an important piece of legislation. I want to thank the member for his commitment and support for the bill.

The reality is that he supports it and he knows that the government is doing the right thing for farmers in Ontario, but then he turns around like so many rural members—they start with the praise and they praise the farmers but they don't see the reciprocal relationships. Yes, farmers feed cities and we're very, very proud and very, very supportive of that in urban Ontario, in the urban communities. But over 50% of food processing, Mr. Speaker, happens in urban ridings. And while farmers should be thanked by the people in the cities and the communities who eat the great food that they produce, at the same time farmers should be thanking cities because cities enrich farmers all the time. Being consumers in the field and understanding the importance of what the consumer wants is an extraordinarily important part of that reciprocal relationship.

I also want to talk to the fact that this government understands very well how important the farming community is in Ontario. One out of every eight jobs in Ontario is in agricultural production and processing, and so it's an extraordinarily important sector. We are providing stability. I sat yesterday at ROMA, speaking with municipalities from across Ontario, rural municipalities, talking about the stabilized funding we're giving them with the Ontario community investment fund. We're moving away from ad hoc application processes—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing and the member from Essex.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —and we're moving toward stabilized, regular funding programs. I tell you, the members we spoke with—the representatives, the wardens, the reeves, the councillors from rural Ontario—very much appreciate the stabilized funding. They know we're going in the right direction.

I appreciate the member and all the members opposite for their support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to add to the comments by the member for Essex—more on his comments than on the bill itself. I think the member for Essex brought up a very valid point and one that is often forgotten in this chamber. When you look at Legislatures around the world and around Canada, our standing committees are somewhat unique in that we only deal with the business of the House in our standing committees, where many other Legislatures do have standing committees on agriculture or on industry, where those committees are tasked to look at those sectors of our economy and of our society to help engage those sectors, to listen to them and to bring forward legislative initiatives on their behalf.

I do hope the Minister of Agriculture and the parliamentary assistant are listening. I think it's a good, valid point. I think it behooves all of us in this Legislature to actually look at ways that we can improve the functionality and improve our execution of our responsibilities to our constituents. Standing committees on agriculture and other sectors would be one way that that could be accomplished.

I do hope—I don't see them, I'm looking around; I'm sure they must be listening on the TV or watching TV—that the minister and the parliamentary assistant are taking part in this debate—it's their bill—taking part in that debate—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches—East York should stand up if he wants to make a point of order, instead of yelling across the floor. And the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington knows we don't kind of hint that someone is not here, okay? Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you for clarifying that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're welcome.

Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I couldn't agree more with the comments that were made by the member from Essex that agricultural insurance is one of the fundamental tools we have to protect farmers and ensure our food security, but it is but one tool.

He also talked about what else could be done to make sure that we protect farmers. I will give you an example from Nickel Belt. We will all remember when the government, in its wisdom, decided to cancel the Slots at Racetracks Program. We have Sudbury Downs in Nickel Belt; we have a racetrack. We don't anymore. What do you figure happened to all of the hay farmers who used to grow their crops to feed those horses? The horses are gone. They have gone down south because every racetrack down south all got a deal, but the one and only racetrack in the north never got a deal. We don't have horse racing anymore. We don't have horses anymore, but we certainly do have a lot of farmers who are going through really tough times, because to change from growing the special hay that you need to feed a racehorse to growing anything else in Nickel Belt—we are not talking Niagara Peninsula here, we're talking Nickel Belt; it is not easy.

Hay had been growing in Nickel Belt and had been feeding the horses and had been sustaining the farmers. Because they had that cash crop coming in they could buy a trailer, buy a new tractor, invest in their barns, make sure that they were able to grow other crops that were sold throughout the farmers' market in my riding and in Sudbury, but all of this was taken away. A lot of my farmers don't farm anymore. A lot of tractors are up for sale and a lot of families are having a tough time. It

should have never gone down this way, Speaker. It should have never gone that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to stand up in this House and speak to the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014. I want to begin by thanking the member from Essex for his remarks and also for his support for this bill.

Agriculture is one of the major areas of our economy; actually, Ontario is known to be an agricultural province. Not very many people may be aware of this fact, but the reality is that we are one of the largest agriculture jurisdictions in Canada, apart from our very heavy manufacturing and other industrial base in this province. That's why our government is very keen to support our agriculture and the agri-food industry in Canada, in Ontario. For that reason we are expanding the insurance coverage for our agricultural industries in this province.

This act, the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014, is going to provide that kind of coverage—which our farmers deserve, to have that kind of coverage. It will include so many crops; I may just list of some of them. It includes the areas of fresh vegetables, fruits, honey, processing vegetables, grains and oilseeds, tobacco and specialty crops. This is what this act is going to do. It's based on a premium paid by the farmers, paid by the Ontario government, as well as our federal partners.

I think this is a good act, and I support this. I urge all my colleagues in this House to support this act because we need to support our farmers to make sure that they have peace of mind when they put their crops, the seeds, in the ground. They have to have the peace of mind that their efforts are going to pay back when they get the harvest, and if something happens, government and insurance are there to help them. So I urge every member in this House to support this bill, Mr. Speaker.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank the members for Beaches–East York, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Nickel Belt and the Minister of MTCU and Research and Innovation.

I'll just explain once again that this is enabling legislation. It really just brings into the fold the possibility of protecting livestock and the honey industry; there are no regulatory changes or funding attached to the bill. New regulations would be needed before livestock farmers and other producers are protected under the Insurance Act, and new funding would be needed as well. So let's see that commitment.

As soon as we pass this bill, I would hope and expect that the government would attach a dollar value to what they're ready and prepared to support the industries with, but I won't hold my breath on that, given the austerity nature of this government.

I want to thank the member for Beaches–East York specifically, who used his two minutes to remind the

farmers of this province that they should be thankful for people eating their food, I guess is what his message was. I want to thank him for that little gem.

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, you should give yourself applause because it will add to the highlight reel of films where I show members and farmers in rural Ontario exactly what this government thinks of agriculture producers in the province. They think that cities should be thankful that farmers even exist to be able to have the luxury of feeding them. That explains a whole lot in terms of their direction and their priorities when it comes to agriculture. That is a gem. That's the gift that keeps on giving, and I certainly appreciate the member for that.

I want to see some real, tangible effort put forward by this government. You've got a lot of work to do. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Let's see an apprenticeship program for young farmers. That's something that's easy to do. Farm families would love the ability to bring in new people to educate them and to teach them. That's something that you could easily do, and I know it would be welcomed by the industry.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Also, research and development: There's a huge gap there that's lacking.

I appreciate the time, Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to inform you that I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade; my colleague the member from Scarborough–Agincourt; and the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I've heard some very interesting comments today. I grew up in a rural part of Ontario—King township, population 800—surrounded by some of the most beautiful farmland that you can imagine. I will let you know that many a hot summer day was spent baling and bringing in very heavy bundles of hay. Many friends who are farmers and have invested their life in producing food for us to eat, and many contacts in the Holland Marsh area, specifically—the salad bowl of southern Ontario, as they like to call it.

I have an opportunity, because they're just north of my riding, to meet often with farmers in that area and to hear what their concerns are, and to bring their concerns to our rural caucus and the appropriate ministers.

They are very much looking for partnerships. They're not being drawn into divisive arguments, as the member opposite would try to have us be drawn into. We're not into divisive arguments about who owes what to whom; this is a symbiotic relationship. The farmers I know and the city folk I know are all thankful.

I thank the member from Essex for his opening comments.

I just wanted to spend a minute, really, to talk about this expanded suite of products and their offerings, and to

reaffirm that Ontario is committed to helping its agri-food partners manage risk. Business risk management programs, like production insurance, help producers deal with situations that are outside of their control, such as weather, disease and extreme market fluctuations.

Production insurance makes timely payments to producers and eliminates the need for costly ad hoc responses to adverse conditions. So this is a far better system for farmers, a far better system for government, a far better system for all of us, because it's far more predictive, far more controllable.

By giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance, we'll help them to better manage their risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

I can certainly say that from what I've learned of farmers throughout the Holland Marsh area and across Ontario, and even in my ancestral home of King township, farmers are among the most entrepreneurial people we have in this province, and if there is a way of doing something better and less expensively, they have found the way and are oftentimes the leaders in implementing that.

A lot of that, I think, goes back to the very good education system we have. I'm encouraged to see the number of friends and associates I have who have availed themselves of great agricultural courses at Guelph university and a number of colleges, to bring some science and business management to their farming operations—because as we all know, farms are businesses. You have to be a good business person, as well as an expert in horticulture, to be a good farmer.

In Canada, we have this national suite of integrated and complementary business risk management programs in place to help farmers manage risks that are beyond their control. It includes things like production insurance, which is the program I mentioned earlier, developed to help farmers address, in a timely manner, yield losses due to natural events related to weather, pests and disease.

Ontario's inability to offer production insurance plans for commodities beyond crop and perennial plants represents a significant gap in the suite of business risk management programs. That's why I think the introduction of this bill will address that need and help Ontario's farmers move forward.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would pass the floor to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker. It's really my pleasure to rise today to talk about these particular acts. I'm going to talk about it from a different angle. It will address the insurance part, but I'm going to come from a different angle.

After taking over the ministry, specifically the file on international trade—I think this is a very interesting file related to many other ministries in government; for example, trade related to natural resources, mineral mining,

trade related to energy, related to even education. But one big item here—trade, export—which is so hugely related, is the agriculture industry.

In 2010, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and I were in China. At that time, we engaged a couple of stakeholders in China to talk about the food industry in China. We all know China is facing tremendous challenges in terms of their food safety, the quality and things like that.

So a few years passed, and last year Premier Kathleen Wynne and Minister Duguid and I were in China. We talked about clean tech and all that, and then we suddenly found out that in the agriculture industry in Canada, in Ontario, we do have a tremendous potential for engaging China, perhaps even India. The reason for that is when we were in China, a lot of large companies, medium-sized companies and small companies, all related to food or farming, approached us: "How is Ontario doing? We want to do more."

0940

To be specific, we engaged one of the largest companies in the world now, Alibaba. We talked to them, and in that particular meeting they actually told us right away, "Look, we want to market your Ontario products related to farming." When Prime Minister Harper went to China, he also met Alibaba, and then the news suddenly came out that in one day Alibaba sold over 90,000 Canadian lobsters to China. You can see the potential there. It's tremendous.

There are other countries—for example, two countries in the world, India and China, have 2.6 billion people. That's 40% of the world's population. Just imagine these two countries, all the people, eating our farming products. That will be tremendous potential for Ontario.

This is very interesting to me and very important now since I am the minister responsible for international trade, so I just wanted to talk about the significance.

After coming back from the October mission last year, I talked to the Premier, and the Premier told me, "Michael, go back to China. This time, really engage their agricultural industry." So the good news is that the Premier, just a couple of days ago, announced that Minister Jeff Leal, the agriculture minister, and I will be going to China in April to market our products, so that in Ontario, especially the rural areas, we can grow more and we can process more food, crops—cherries and blueberries and canola oil and ginseng and milk and pork and beef and fish. There's a lot of things that I can sell.

Thank you for the time. Soo Wong, it's your turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think he meant the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, but that's okay. Go ahead.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak in support of the proposed Agriculture Insurance Act, following the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, as well as my colleague from Newmarket—Aurora.

Mr. Speaker, both of my colleagues have spoken about why this particular bill is very important. I'm going to take a different lens to this particular bill.

As urban members in the city of Toronto, we value and respect our farmers. As one of the members who has a history with farming—I'm not sure a lot of members know that my grandparents on my mother's side own one of the largest poultry farms in mainland China. Furthermore, I have extended family friends who—my good colleague from Beaches—East York talked about bok choy. They are large producers in the northern part of Toronto. So I have, not just as a consumer of Ontario-grown food, an appreciation for the value of farmers and what they do every day.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will work with the federal government in terms of the national integrated and complementary business risk management programs to help farmers in a time of need, especially when it comes to natural disasters, the weather, insects and what have you.

This legislation also allows us to participate in production insurance, a program that will help farmers address yield losses in a timely manner due to natural incidents related to weather, pests and disease. If the legislation is passed—and there is going to be an amendment—the new plan will help the government to develop and implement a new production insurance plan in the following areas:

In terms of operational, there will be the development of a plan, including working with stakeholders. Oftentimes, we hear from the opposition parties criticizing the government for not including stakeholders. The proposed amendment of the legislation will allow the government to reach out to discuss with stakeholders, particularly the farmers who are going to be affected by this proposed legislation.

It will also talk about third-party certification by an actuary. That's a good thing.

It will also mean working with the federal government, and you've heard from me—having been critical of the federal government involvement, and supporting the province of Ontario. It will verify and agree on actuarial assessment and ensure compliance with the national regulations and guidelines. Furthermore, it will also mean the fiscal authorities—it will mean that through the Treasury Board there will be financial approvals.

The other very important part of the proposed legislation—if passed, it will allow the minister, in terms of regulations—

Interjections.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, this is very disrespectful. We hear this third party conversation across when we have very important debate here on this particular bill.

With respect to this legislation, if passed, the minister will set up a regulation in terms of our agricultural products that will be eligible for coverage under the production insurance. The initial minister's regulation would include the crops and perennial plants, which already occurs, but will also include new agri-foods—because we know that every day, there is new food produce, and we know farmers are very innovative. But more importantly, they are very creative in bringing new food to our tables and to our dining rooms.

Mr. Speaker, I hear my colleagues opposite are supportive of the bill, and I'm hopeful that this bill will soon go to committee.

At the end of the day, the Ontario agriculture sector is a huge growth industry and, if passed, it will continue to grow. By giving the producers, meaning the farmers, greater opportunity to access production insurance, we are actually helping to manage risk better and encourage innovation, profitability and most importantly, job creation, in this very large agri-food sector.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Etobicoke Centre. I'm sure he's going to have some really innovative comments about this proposed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I am thrilled to be speaking to this bill. I'm elected from the riding of Etobicoke Centre, which is a riding within the city of Toronto, but I'm proud to speak to this bill for a number of reasons. I'd like to share with you what those are.

First of all, last year, many parts of the city—and Etobicoke was one of the parts of the city that was hardest hit—went through some very serious flooding. A lot of people in my community were impacted. I distinctly remember this last year, when knocking on doors during the election campaign, speaking with people who still hadn't recovered from that tragedy, from those floods. Those floods had gutted thousands of people's basements. The impact wasn't just financial; it wasn't just economic. People's lives were washed away. Some of the folks who I met had lost wedding photos, had lost mementos, had lost things of tremendous sentimental value in addition to incurring tremendous financial costs. One of the lessons that I took away from speaking with those people in my community was that a lot of the folks thought that they were covered by insurance. Some were, but many were not.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton might want to sit down.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Many of the folks were deeply impacted by that. So the importance of insurance in protecting people's livelihoods is a really important issue, one that touched our community directly. It's one of the reasons I am honoured to speak to this bill—because that's what this bill is about. For me, it's about protecting the livelihoods of people who are trying to support their families, who are making an important economic contribution to our province.

Business risk management programs like production insurance help producers deal with situations that are outside their control: weather, disease and extreme market fluctuations. Production insurance makes timely payments to producers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be some cross-floor debate going on, and I can't even hear the speaker. If you want to yell at each other, go outside and yell at each other. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate that.

Production insurance makes timely payments to producers and eliminates a need for costly ad hoc programs. Giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance will help them better manage risk and encourage greater innovation and job creation because when businesses have stability in the marketplace—and I know this from my business experience—that encourages investment; that encourages commitment on the part of businesses. So this is really, again, about managing risk, about protecting livelihoods and encouraging investment in a sector that's tremendously important to our economy.

0950

If I may, I'd just like to say a few quick things about the importance of our agri-food sector. Again, I come from a riding here in Toronto, but we can't underestimate the importance of the agri-food sector. This is a sector that generates significant impact on our gross domestic product and significant employment, but of course it's a sector that serves everyone in Ontario. This is something that, whether we're from an urban riding, a suburban riding or a rural riding, I hope all the members of the House will rally around.

In Canada, we have, of course, a national suite of integrated business risk management programs that include production insurance, and Ontario's inability to offer production insurance plans for commodities beyond crops and perennial plants represents a significant gap in that suite.

But the thing I'd like to also mention is the importance of how the insurance is structured. Currently, when participants in the agri-food sector are hit hard, they have to come to the government for ad hoc support. One of the things that I think about a lot is how we can manage our taxpayers' money as effectively as possible, and insurance programs are an excellent way of doing that because the contributions to that program are shared. They're shared by the producers, who are the investors, but they're also shared by the provincial and federal governments.

When I think about this, this is a really important way of making sure that our provincial government has some stability, that we're prepared for some of the disasters that might strike our agri-food producers, but it also makes sure that the cost of this is spread evenly and predictably across those participants. That's a really important element. It's not just about managing risk. It's not just about protecting people's livelihoods, but it's also about sharing costs and managing taxpayer dollars responsibly.

The other thing I would say is that this amendment that we're speaking to today doesn't have an immediate financial impact. This just allows us to extend what is already an important and successful program to more producers across Ontario.

We have an agri-food sector that's critical to our economy. It serves all of Ontario. It helps manage risk. It encourages investment and innovation. It allows us to manage taxpayers' dollars wisely. I support this. I know

the members on this side support it, and I hope all members of the Legislature will support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a pleasure to rise and talk a little bit about agriculture. It's interesting to note—and some people in this Legislature may not be fully aware—that a tremendous amount of agriculture actually happens in northern Ontario.

I'm a northern boy. I've lived there all my life, but even I was surprised when I went to the New Liskeard research centre—which is under threat of being closed. We're hoping that this government will continue to see the importance of the New Liskeard research centre. But I was amazed to find out just how much canola and oats are grown in northern Ontario. In one instance, almost half of our production comes from there. It's quite fascinating. When you think of the north, you don't necessarily think of agriculture.

It was interesting to see that seed potatoes are all started at this New Liskeard research facility. Basically, they start in a test tube. It was fascinating to go through that and have that entire learning experience. When you think of strawberries—they're started in the New Liskeard research centre as well. It was quite an exciting and fascinating day, and I would hope that all members would avail themselves of a trip up north and have a look at the plentiful agriculture that's there.

This New Liskeard research centre also has 455 head of cattle. They do the research there on growing cattle in winter climates. Again, it's a fascinating and ultra-interesting challenge to see.

I would hope that the members would at least, if they can't get up to the New Liskeard research centre and learn a little bit more about what's happening there, certainly contact my office. We'd be delighted to share with them the many and exciting agricultural opportunities that are available in the north.

This weekend, my wife, Patty, and I will be in Powassan for the farmers' luncheon. It's an annual event. We'll meet with the cattle folk. We will meet with the growers. It's always a spectacular opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it's a pleasure to rise and speak to this important bill and the comments that have been made so far.

My riding is largely an urban riding, but a good portion of the Tecumseh side is rural. We have the Bonduelle plant, as the minister knows, and a large farming population. In the Essex county portion, we have, as the member from Essex said, huge greenhouse operations as well, and we have some of the largest mushroom farms in Ontario. When I go to my grocery store to buy mushrooms—if I want to get a can of mushrooms, they're from China. If I want to buy fresh mushrooms, they're from Ontario.

When the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade said he was going to take the Minister

of Agriculture to China in April, I said, “What an opportunity for the government to reach out across the aisle.” Take the member from Essex; take the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, the agriculture critics in the House—take them with them on this trade mission and let them get a feel for what the possibilities are of more international trade on the agricultural side. That shows that you’re listening. That shows that you can work together on major events. I know that others have spoken this morning about travelling committees. This wouldn’t exactly be a travelling committee, but it would certainly be an outreach opportunity.

When I hear the members from Toronto say, if I paraphrase, “Good things grow in Ontario, but it’s because we process them in Toronto; that’s when it really matters,” I say: Minister, you have to read the Hansard to see what your member from Beaches-East York had to say earlier today. I think it’s well worth the read.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I’m so pleased to rise today to speak to this very important bill. The greater Toronto area is actually one of the largest food production areas in Ontario. The relationship between our agri-producers and our production and manufacturing is very, very strong and interdependent. I’m, frankly, amazed at how many manufacturing and finished goods start off with agri-products as their base input. That’s a very good thing. We know that one of the reasons why our food production cluster is so vast is because of the diversity that we have in this province and in this region that really supports that manufacturing base.

I do believe that one of the reasons why Ontario’s economy is strong and resilient is because of the diversity of all of our employment clusters. They are interrelated and they work together to support Ontario’s economy.

What I really see here in the direction of this bill is that Ontario is committed to helping our agri-food partners manage risk. That is also very important in terms of providing stability and allowing our agri-food producers to really focus on what they do best. We know that they are hard-working. I’ve actually just been out on consultations. I’ve met many, many of them. They’re such a diverse group, a hard-working group, and ought to be supported to ensure that our agri-food sector remains strong and globally competitive. Starting with the strong and diverse and rich economy here in Ontario, we need to make sure that we manage that risk and strengthen the sector as a whole.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It’s a privilege to speak to Bill 40. I do like the fact that extended coverage will be given to farmers who produce their products, other than crops and perennials.

I do have some concerns. I recall back, I believe it was in the 2011 election, there was a promise made by the government to, in fact, waive the first-year premium for crop insurance. I don’t know if that’s going to be ad-

dressed in this particular bill or not, but it’s something for consideration. I don’t know what that would actually cost this government, who appear to be somewhat in the red—no pun intended. But that is a concern that I would ask them to look at.

Chatham-Kent-Essex is very rich in agriculture. As a matter of fact, there are over—or close to, anyway—2,200 farms in the Chatham-Kent-Essex area. Of course, Leamington, which is a proud area in my riding, is the greenhouse capital of Canada, and we’re very, very proud of that.

1000

Unfortunately, this government had a problem with Heinz. We lost 740 jobs there, and 250 part-time, but thank goodness, Highbury Canco came in and at least we have 250 jobs there, and that’s a good thing.

The only other thing I would like to touch upon, Speaker, is the neonics issue. That’s a serious issue right now. I met with farmers and seed growers—that represented over 80% of the seed-growing in Canada—at a farm in my riding, the Devolder farm, along with our critic, Toby Barrett, with regard to the neonics. Some 80% of these people are—well, they’re wanting to reduce the neonics, and that’s a major issue in this area. I really hope the government takes a better look at it, or else crop insurance is going to go sky-high.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from—there were five speakers, so whoever takes it—Newmarket-Aurora, I guess, for the two minutes.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the ability to bring some closure to today’s discussions about the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014.

I’m so glad to hear the continuing debate, the continuing discussion, around the importance of the agri-food industry, both the growing and the processing of that food. It has been noted that this is an area that has the potential for considerable growth, and that speaks volumes. That’s very positive for the economy of Ontario and for all of us in Ontario, regardless of where you live, rural or urban. I’m glad to hear that move ahead.

I just wanted to touch on a couple of key points of this proposed legislation that we perhaps didn’t get to today, just to reinforce that this production insurance is premium-based. The costs are shared by farmers and government, and that encourages best practices and the appropriate sharing of risk. As I said earlier, farmers, in my experience, are among the greatest entrepreneurs this country has produced, and we look forward to supporting them.

An expanded production insurance program could, if passed, provide financial assistance but divide the costs between the federal government, the provincial government and producers in a predictable and incremental way over a much larger time period.

Ontario’s agricultural sector, as has been mentioned, has huge potential for growth and the Agriculture Insurance Act will, if passed, allow for this growth to happen. By giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance, we would help them manage risk better and encourage greater innovation, greater profitability

and greater job creation in the agri-food sector. I do hope that this House supports the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you, Speaker. You seem to be practising that, so that's good.

I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act. I've reviewed some of the insightful comments by our critic from Haldimand–Norfolk, somebody who has been trained—I think he has a master's in science and agriculture—and who has certainly worked in the industry and is very familiar with the agriculture of his region.

The agriculture across the province is very varied. Agriculture in our area is probably the largest agricultural sector in eastern Ontario, and it's quite different than the crops and produce in western Ontario. We've talked about the greenhouse industry in western Ontario, something we don't see in the east, but certainly soybeans and corn are major industries, along with dairy, which is shared with some of the areas in the north.

Current legislation that supports some 90 products was enacted by the Mike Harris government. The critic here talked about the consultation that went on during the bill, the different readings—they went around the province; they talked to various farming groups—and also, when it came time to put in regulations, further consultation to try to get it right.

Now we have some legislation where the bill for the products that are there works fairly well. No question, we need to go further. We've seen some major disasters when it came to some of our products that aren't covered. So it's certainly time to move on. But it gives an example of just how the industry that lives and breathes farming throughout the community really needs to get their input.

You're looking at a government here that collectively needed five people just to talk 20 minutes on this bill because of the lack of experience; I think they have one member that has an agricultural base, and he's not even here today. It just shows that we need that consultation to find out and get this right. I think that's a point that we have to look at.

Look at the consultation and what has not happened under this government. The Kemptville College example: a major educational institution in my region, certainly the only English-language institution in eastern Ontario, closed without any consultation, without any notice. There's some sugar-coating that we're going to put a committee together to look at it. Over the years I had five brothers who went to that college; and nephews. Actually, in the last graduating class that's just finishing up this year, my nephew Sam is going through. It's too bad that he has the last opportunity.

Various parents throughout my region came to me and told me last year that their son was hoping to go to Kemptville and would not have that opportunity. I have to say that in most cases they didn't go on to post-secondary. They didn't go on to somewhere else, and

that's very typical of the agricultural college enrolment. They tend to go to the institutions that are close. It allows them to be home on the weekends. They didn't travel to almost Windsor, to go to Sarnia; or to Ridgetown, to go to the college up there. You can imagine it's just impractical even to get home on the weekends. It's barely a full day's drive; you're lucky to get through Toronto.

If they really had an initiative to look after agriculture, decisions like that wouldn't be made. Certainly, they would have planned ahead; they just wouldn't be closed. We're looking at a community that raised a couple of million dollars locally to build the new dairy farm research facility just a couple of years ago—money that was gathered from the community that could have been put into the hospital. Now it's in an empty shell, the cows moved to Guelph, the quota with it, the robots. It's just not an efficient way of running anything, let alone the agriculture industry. It really speaks spades for just what the interest is with this.

Agriculture is a tough business. I look at last year: In our area we had, of course, a cold winter. At that time we hadn't experienced many cold winters so we complained about it and we're hit again, of course, this year with one. It led to a late spring, a wet spring, a lot of concern about getting crops in. We were lucky, we got three or four days. The farms now are fairly well set up so that when they get a break they can get a lot of crops in. So we got our crops in a little bit late, but relatively—at that time it seemed okay, but then we ran into a fairly wet summer. Then what seemed to be really horrific at the time, we had an extremely early frost—not just a mild frost but an extremely heavy frost—just before the plowing match. I know my brother was quite upset with it because he thought that was it, the corn wasn't—but it came along and, actually, we had a fairly good crop in eastern Ontario.

It was different in western Ontario; they didn't get that break in the springtime. They didn't get the crops in until much later. They ran into a cool summer; they didn't get the frost but the crops didn't mature. So, really, they had a much more serious problem out there.

In eastern Ontario the wet summer—we had a huge mould problem. Soybeans—interesting because you could really pick out the fields and the varieties that were not a problem before, but all of a sudden losses—one of our neighbours, one stretch of land was 100% lost to the mould. So a lot of issues can happen there.

You get something in early—the wet summer, warm summer, mould. Then you've got to deal with crop prices. Farming, it's a science; it really depends on a lot of factors. Then you have to worry about our neighbours. What's the climate down there? Is there going to be a half-decent price at the end of the year, if they have a good crop in the States? They certainly have a lot more favourable climate, generally. So it's not an easy thing.

1010

The insurance really is important. If we're going to expect that we can survive—there are lots of years when North America depends on Canadian supply. If we don't

protect that, as you can imagine, if we don't have the food and the Americans don't have it, where are we going to go for that? A lot of countries in the world depend on Canadian food, so the insurance does a lot more than just protect our farmers. It's really protecting our livelihood up here.

We're looking at the enabling legislation here. We're looking to see just what it covers. We're hoping that there is sufficient consultation as we go around, getting it right. There are a lot of things to deal with here.

We talked about the PED virus going around through the pig industry just a couple of years ago.

Part of our strategy has to be working with our markets, which are the Americans. They're doing a lot of research. We should leverage that. We should work with them and find out the best practices, because if we don't mirror a lot of their best practices, they won't have the confidence to buy our food. Not only will it help us get more for the money we spend on research, but it actually does a lot for the market down the road.

Hopefully, since the markets are so integrated, with product back and forth—I think Toby mentioned that we ship our product down. They go down to the same markets that the American hogs are going to. It seemed like the virus started down there. The trucks come back and it's carried back. The same could happen in reverse.

We have to make sure that the technology and the research we do looks at that integrated market. At the same time, they have been interested in making sure it works for us. We want to make sure that that's actually put in there.

We're looking now at hog herds in Ontario. They're about 30% less than they were just a short time ago.

It's the same thing with BSE. In our area, BSE—we don't have as big a beef industry, but it really hurt our dairy industry. I remember young calves being shipped off to market, and it used to be income that supplemented the dairy. It actually cost money. By the time you paid for the transportation and the auctioneering, you actually had a bill to send small calves to market. It just shows some of the issues that—how integrated the different markets are. I think it's important that if we're going to have an impact, we have to do that. We have to look at the overall market and the overall areas.

Certainly, this government—I look at our area in eastern Ontario, and rural Ontario, where I grew up, and a lot of things, the way it used to be, and some of the programs that they've brought out, and I don't think they've really considered what happens in rural Ontario.

I know I just have a minute, so I'll just go on to this.

I was at a ROMA conference just after this government took over. They came out with some new environmental regulations around water. There needed to be some things tightened up there.

One of the delegates stood up and said, "You just passed some legislation. We have a small park in our region, and we had a Johnny-on-the-spot. So the community got together, and we raised some money. We built a small building, and we put in a well, a flush toilet

and a sink to wash your hands. Now you're telling us we have to lock the door and put the Johnny-on-the-spot back. Is that what you're telling us?"

The then Minister of Agriculture—she was also the Minister of the Environment—stood up and said, "That's exactly what I'm telling you, because there's nobody going to die on my watch."

So you think back. Okay, you've taken a little bit of research and a little bit of knowledge, but what happens when you don't wash your hands? Health has come to the point where we know that people need to—proper hygiene is important. I guess we've got grass that we can rub our hands on. But that's the logic: Rural Ontario is a little bit different. We don't have piped water everywhere. We can be miles away from the nearest water supply. There are ways around that. But they were forced to shut the building.

We've had the same issues in our area. We live there on well water. We survive very well. There are issues that you have to look at, but it's manageable. That's what we have to do: We have to look at rural solutions.

I guess my time is up. I'll have a chance to finish later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who will continue with his submission the next time we discuss this bill.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we do introduction of guests, just to announce that the students from the model Parliament will be coming into the House. I will be acknowledging them to save us from 96 members standing up and introducing individuals. That would be my preference. I'm not going to stop you from doing so, but we won't have five minutes of doing that. So I'm just announcing to you that when they do come, I'll announce them, if that's okay with you, and it will help us save on introductions.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's my pleasure today to introduce Karen Mote and Les Mote, who are the parents—the proud parents, I might add—of Madison Mote, who is today the page captain.

I also have the privilege of introducing a constituent of mine for the model Parliament, Nicholas Ferreira.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome a constituent of mine who is here as part of a lobby group supporting aHUS Canada. They're here on their information day at Queen's Park. Her name is Jennifer Hamilton. Welcome, Jennifer.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to welcome from Huntsville Mr. Gordon Daw, who has been down getting some medical treatment at hospitals in the area; his daughter, who is well-known around Queen's Park,

Lesley Daw; and occupational therapist Lauren Schwartz, who is here for the first time at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome this morning Adam Van Meerbergen, a student in grade 10 at Resurrection Catholic Secondary School in Kitchener. Adam is participating in today's Ontario model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to welcome aHUS Canada to Queen's Park today. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to supporting patients and families living with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome. With us today, we have: Michael Eygenraam; Margriet Eygenraam; Sonia Giroto; Sonia's son Joshua; and Toni Vernon. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Zach Misener from Stratford. Zach is participating in the model Parliament program today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: On behalf of Cindy Forster, it's also my pleasure this morning to welcome Jake Falardeau, who lives in the riding of Welland and is also participating in this year's Ontario model Parliament. Jake is here with his grandmother Pauline. Today also happens to be Jake's 16th birthday. Happy birthday, Jake, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good morning. I'd like to introduce page Niko Hoogeveen's father, Dr. Paul Hoogeveen. Welcome to the public gallery.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to welcome Kedron elementary school here, from my riding of Oshawa. I was pleased to run into them on their tour today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M. Grant Crack: Merci, monsieur le Président. I'll be very, very careful this morning. Il me fait grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue au maire de Clarence-Rockland, M. Guy Desjardins. I won't introduce a former MPP for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell; I'll give you that honour, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A very wise choice.

Mr. Grant Crack: But I'd also like to welcome TVO to Queen's Park today. We all know TVO from TVOKids and the content that they provide for our young folks. As well, of course, everybody knows The Agenda with Steve Paikin. There is a reception tonight from 5 to 7 at Queen's Park, and I would welcome everyone down to visit TVO Ontario.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome my beautiful granddaughter Rachel Rynard, who is in the model Parliament here today representing Simcoe North.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That one I can forgive.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to introduce a beautiful 29-year-old to members of the Legislature: my seatmate from Halton. She's 29 years old today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I do want everyone introduced.

The member from London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Ghadeir Madlol, who is here with the model Parliament. She is the sister of current page Muntder Madlol and former page Mustfah Madlol, all of whom are from London West. Welcome.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to introduce Joshua DeBortoli and his mother, Sonia Giroto, who are here with us at Queen's Park today for the aHUS lobby day, and also Samantha Mariano, who is representing Vaughan during the 2015 Legislative Assembly of Ontario model Parliament.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome two of my students in Scarborough—Agincourt, Daven Siu and Kevin Vuong, who is also the Minister of Labour for the model Parliament. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to introduce Leah Cash. She's the cousin of Natalie McLean. She joins us today in the Legislature—welcome—to support our wonderful Natalie McLean, a page here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'd like to introduce Beverly and Richard Fiacconi. Beverly has been a constituency assistant in my office since 2003. Her daughter Courtney Fiacconi is here as part of the model Parliament today.

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to welcome my good friend and former colleague Chris Yaccato, representing the Lung Association.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I seek unanimous consent to mark Pink Shirt Day by inviting all members to remain in the Legislature after question period for a group photo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have heard that this was coming and I just want to express that the normal convention is not to use the House as that kind of a vehicle. I just caution everyone that there are ways to do this—I don't want this not done—but I will put the unanimous consent on the floor.

Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, that's very disappointing that we don't have unanimous consent, but I do invite all members to go to the main staircase for a group photo after question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Thank you. As a continuation of the discussion: It is now advised that all members who want to participate in Pink Shirt Day would assemble. I don't think it matters if you actually are wearing pink; if you want to show support and have your picture taken at the main staircase, it would be advisable. I appreciate the member's flexibility in my concern.

Further introductions?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I didn't finish that, but I'll do the rotation. It is your turn. The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1040

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to welcome Ashlyn Simpson, who's here for the model Parliament, from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I'd like to welcome her to the Legislature.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome Fionntan Ferris and Dana Nasr, who are here from London West to participate in the Ontario model Parliament.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce three special guests today; first, my daughter, Oriana, who's in the gallery. She's participating in this year's model Parliament. Hello, Oriana. Also here today is Charlie Violin. Charlie is another student from Halton participating in the model Parliament. Thirdly, in the members' east gallery is my new intern from the University of Akron, Ohio: Jermaine Collins. Welcome to our team and welcome to Queen's Park, Jermaine. Good to have you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm going to join the gang now and welcome, from my riding, Devin Reynolds, who is also participating in the model Parliament today and tomorrow.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce a member from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Muneed Javed, who is participating in the model Parliament today.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to welcome, from the great riding of Leeds–Grenville, Alicia Sutton, who's here for the model Parliament. I look forward to being the Speaker Friday morning in the model Parliament, so I get to—the tables are turned now, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, am I looking forward to that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I tried.

The deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce William Alexander from the riding of St. Catharines, who is participating in the model Parliament.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I just noticed that the Vernons are here, who are from the beautiful riding of Don Valley East—Toni and her husband, I believe. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Grant Crack: It also gives me great pleasure to introduce the acting CAO of the city of Clarence-Rockland, Helen Collier is with us. Welcome. I believe that Mr. Desjardins's wife is with us as well. So welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I know you're introducing everyone here for the Ontario model Parliament. I know I have three here from Pickering–Scarborough East, but I want to welcome all students for this program. It's a great program. Welcome to all of you. Thank you for being here. As Minister of Children and Youth Services, I think this is a fantastic program.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Joining us for the model Parliament, we have Agi Kapllani, Theresa Nguyen and Michelle Wang. I'd like to thank them for participating and for being here today.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd also like to recognize Kieran Lawlor, who's here from Beaches–East York for the model Parliament. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I also have a visitor. It's Jack Ainsworth, and he is from my riding from Nickel Belt.

Welcome to Toronto and welcome to Queen's Park. He's with the model Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want the record to show that I tried. I was going to do this anyway.

We have with us today, in the public galleries on both sides, the 84 students from across the province participating in the second annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario model Parliament.

I not only would like to thank all the parties for participating and ensuring that this is to be done the way it should be done, but I think we also owe the staff here at the Legislature a great deal of gratitude for the work they've done on the model Parliament this year.

In the Speaker's gallery, we have His Worship Guy Desjardins, mayor of Clarence-Rockland, and his spouse, Aline Desjardins; Ms. Helen Collier, the city administrator; and M. Jean-Marc Lalonde from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell in the 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, you included the following in your mandate letter to the Minister of Health: "Continuing the pursuit of affordable drug access for patients.... This will include a coordinated process for approving new and expensive drugs to minimize the wait for people who need these life-saving medications."

Premier, notwithstanding the minister's last-minute half-baked announcement this morning, why are you allowing him to fail in this mandate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm not sure if patients and families of patients that are suffering from atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, aHUS, would agree with the member opposite that it was a half-baked announcement this morning.

Not by myself, but several days ago the executive officer of the Ontario Public Drug Programs—because this is not a political decision; this is a decision made by clinical experts and bureaucrats searching through the best and most reliable information available. Several days ago I was informed that the executive officer will now provide Soliris to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, or aHUS, who meet defined clinical criteria of the disease.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: Back to the Premier: We're joined by Michael Eygenraam, Joshua DeBortoli and other patients suffering from aHUS who have been waiting for two years for Soliris, the only medication that can actually help them.

I would note how convenient it is that the announcement was made today. I guess it takes a little bit of the heat off of you, but I think people need to know that this

is not going to be funded for all aHUS patients. It's only a one-off strategy. Only those who are really, really sick are going to be able to get access to this, not everybody who needs it. I think that's important for the people of Ontario and the patients who are here in good faith to know.

My question to you, Premier, is: Given the fact that 40 other countries have approved this and it has been approved in the province of Quebec, and the clinical evidence is there that it can actually extend lives and save people, will you commit to permanent funding for Soliris for these patients today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I don't think the people of Ontario want to take the word of the member opposite in terms of the science and clinical evidence behind this decision. Quite frankly, they shouldn't take my word either, even though I'm a practising physician and a public health specialist. But they should take the word and the combined evidence that was provided by our office—not my political office, but by the office of the Ontario Public Drug Programs when they consulted with advocacy groups; when they consulted with other jurisdictions around the world, including Australia and England; when they consulted with the very physicians and specialists that are providing support to these individuals with aHUS. Their combined decision on clinical evidence and science was to provide this solution to those that meet the clinical, eligible criteria for this disease, to provide them with the Soliris treatment that they have asked for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I would suggest that the Minister of Health is trying to have it both ways. He's saying that he's going to fund Soliris, but then there's not clinical evidence in some cases to allow it, so I'm not really sure what he's planning on saying here.

But the fact of the matter is that time after time after time, patients who are facing these devastating diseases have to come to Queen's Park to advocate—put the pressure on you and get media attention in order to get access to the drugs that they really need to save their lives. This has to stop.

Will you commit today to permanent funding for Soliris for the patients who need it?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I truly believe that the member opposite, in her heart of hearts, supports a process which is apolitical; that reaches out to the exact specialists, clinical experts and scientists who know more than you and I will ever know about this condition; that reaches out to the advocates of this illness, the patients and their families; that looks around the world at other jurisdictions that have also resolved this challenging question. In her heart of hearts, I believe that she supports the decision that these clinical experts and these bureaucrats and these officials have made.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question again is to the Premier.

Premier, when you replaced Dalton McGuinty, you promised to do things differently and turn the page on a decade of Liberal scandals. But less than a year into the job, same old same old.

1050

Let there be no mistake: Your failure to remove Pat Sorbara from her job, even temporarily, means that you have chosen to make this scandal worse and erode the integrity reposed in your office.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Premier, I remind you that Premier McGuinty kept senior staff in his office while they were—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will have order. The Minister of Education, come to order.

Please finish.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Premier, I remind you that Premier McGuinty kept senior staff in his office, even under criminal investigation. That resulted in deleted emails and destroyed evidence.

Don't make the same mistake. Show Ontarians the integrity that the Deputy Premier says that you have. Restore confidence in your leadership and show Pat Sorbara the door.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite knows I have taken, and do take, this matter very seriously. Elections Ontario has determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. We'll continue to co-operate fully with the investigation, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Chief Electoral Officer, as the member opposite knows, has clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

The investigations are entirely independent. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been retained.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that we need to let the investigation run its course. That's what we need to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: This isn't out of your hands. There's still a lot that you can do. Why don't you restore some semblance of integrity to your office? Try to protect the integrity of your office, the integrity of the police investigation, the integrity of the Sudbury police board, the integrity of our electoral system and the integrity that Ontarians place in their elected officials.

You can start doing this by directing the secretary of cabinet to seize Ms. Sorbara's computer, and preserve all of her emails, her telephone records and anything else that may lend itself to a police investigation. Will you at least direct the secretary of cabinet to do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, Mr. Speaker—*Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me address the issues—sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was using my silent stare.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just not sure whether to sit or stand.

Mr. Speaker, first let me address the issues arising out of recommendations that came to us through the Information and Privacy Commissioner over the last year or so. We have made many changes in my office and across government. We have put training in place in terms of retention of documents. Those procedures are already in place, so I can reassure the member opposite that those procedures have changed. They are in place; the training has been done.

On the second issue, I really believe that in order for the investigation to be able to continue—as the member knows, it is an independent process. The best thing that we can do is to let it unfold, Mr. Speaker. That actually preserves the integrity of the process and of the investigation, so we're going to let it unfold as it must.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the so-called procedures that have been put in place, there is a pattern of Liberal staffers destroying evidence here. So I want to ask the Premier what steps she has taken to limit Pat Sorbara's access to the levers of power.

Have you stripped her of any authority? Have you ordered anyone to preserve her telephone records? Have you ordered that the hard drives and computers be turned over to the OPP so they don't get wiped, like they did in the gas plants scandal? As leader of the Liberal Party, have you ordered party officials to preserve any evidence at Liberal Party headquarters as far as Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed are involved?

Please, Premier, tell us at least you're doing something here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I've answered these questions over and over again. I made a statement last Friday that made it clear what my position is. We need to let the independent investigation unfold as it will.

There are a lot of issues that we could be talking about, Mr. Speaker. Many of our members have been at the ROMA/OGRA conference. There are a lot of issues that

we could be talking about. In fact, the member opposite could be asking about our announcement this morning to provide funding to build and repair critical infrastructure for small, rural and northern municipalities. The member opposite could be asking about the need for continued action across Canada to invest in public infrastructure. That's a crying need. The member opposite could be asking about the round table tomorrow on missing and murdered aboriginal women that a number of my members and I will be attending. She could be asking about that. Those are very, very important issues.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question. The leader of the third party.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday the Deputy Premier complained that the opposition continues to insist that the Premier answer some very important questions. Sorry to disappoint the Deputy Premier, but we're going to continue to do just that.

So my question is: Who told Pat Sorbara to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have and I do take this matter very, very seriously. I have answered dozens of questions, tens of questions in this House. I will continue to answer those questions.

I made a statement last Friday making it clear what my position is. Elections Ontario has determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. We'll continue to co-operate fully with the independent investigation. The Chief Electoral Officer has stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

These investigations are entirely independent, and I believe that to preserve the integrity of the investigation we need to let it unfold.

It doesn't matter how many times I am asked the question. I have answered, I will continue to answer and I have just given the answer that I will continue to repeat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, what does matter is who told Gerry Loughheed to offer Andrew Olivier a job. Perhaps she can answer that question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the investigation is not being conducted in this Legislature. I have answered questions. I have made very clear my position. I've made it clear that I believe the investigation is separate, that the integrity of the investigation needs to be maintained and we do that by allowing it to be independent.

I take this matter very seriously. I have answered questions and we will continue to co-operate fully with the investigation. I hope the members opposite will do the same.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The matter of who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed the instructions to offer that job is an extremely, extremely serious question. But the Premier has ducked that very question 24 times in this chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock. I ask again calmly: Please, decorum. Let the question be put; let the answer be answered.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Twenty-four times that question has been asked and not answered. The Deputy Premier can actually take note of that as she scores up the questions.

When the Premier refuses to answer, it isn't just that she's showing a lack of respect for me or the people in this chamber; she's showing a lack of respect for the people of Ontario, because these answers are not just for me and they're not just for us. This isn't a silly game. The answers are for the people of this province and they deserve those answers.

So, once again—number 25—I'm going to ask the Premier: Who told Gerry Loughheed and Pat Sorbara to offer a job to Mr. Olivier so he wouldn't run for the nomination in Sudbury?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Because I fundamentally challenge the premise of the question, I say to the member opposite that I have answered those questions. I have made a clear statement of what happened in the Sudbury by-election and why I chose Glenn Thibeault to be the candidate. I made that decision.

There is an investigation going on. That investigation is independent. We need to let that investigation unfold and that's what we're going to do.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. According to Elections Ontario and the OPP, there is evidence that Andrew Olivier was offered a job—offered a bribe. Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed are on tape, and those tapes say that they were acting on behalf of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's from all sides from time to time.

In fairness to the questioner, I don't like interrupting, but I must when there's not enough to be heard. I apologize. Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

Just to recap, the evidence shows—the OPP has the evidence, Elections Ontario has the evidence—that Andrew Olivier was offered a bribe. The tapes show that both Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed say on tape that they were doing that on behalf of this Premier. But the Premier is denying all of that—she's denying all of it. So my question is very clear: Does she have any evidence at all about her version of the story, Speaker? What's her version?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've talked about my position many times in the House.

Again, I'm going to read into the record what the Chief Electoral Officer has said. These are the Chief Electoral Officer's words. It is the section of the Chief Electoral Officer's—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order—second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —report that is germane to the issue of whether there has been guilt determined or not. What he says is this: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

That's why the investigation is not taking place in this House. The investigation is independent, it is unfolding and we need to let it do so, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there are mountains upon mountains of evidence that Andrew Olivier was offered a job in order for him to step aside and clear the way for the hand-picked Liberal candidate so that the Premier would not have to appoint him. There are two taped phone calls. There are police interviews that say that no decision had been made about whether or not to appoint Glenn Thibeault. But the Premier claims that all of this evidence is wrong. So I just want to know, and the people of Ontario, I think, deserve to know, will she share her evidence with us?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have said repeatedly in this House and outside of this House that I had decided that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate. I had made that decision. I've said that over and over and over again.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great choice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Food says it is a great choice—and it is a great choice. It was a great choice. Glenn Thibeault is a terrific representative for Sudbury. He's a strong, strong voice and advocate for Sudbury.

The issues that are confronting Sudbury and other parts of the north are very challenging ones, and we need to make sure that we are making very good decisions to make sure that there are good transportation networks, that there's good investment in infrastructure, that people in Sudbury, like people all over the province, have the prospect of a secure retirement. Those are the issues the member for Sudbury ran on. That's why he's sitting in this House on this side.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement-ary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this is the sixth time this Premier has been asked for any evidence to support her story, and the Premier has yet to provide one shred, one iota of evidence to back up her story. The Premier's version of events simply doesn't match any of the evidence that is currently on record. It doesn't match Gerry Lougheed's taped phone call, it doesn't match Pat Sorbara's taped phone call and it doesn't match what Andrew Olivier told the police.

So let's try it again: In front of all of the evidence that's been put on the record so far, does the Premier have any evidence to back up her version of events? Does she have any evidence to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said a number of times today, Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. We'll continue to work with the authorities, Mr. Speaker. I will continue to fully co-operate, as we have been doing.

The fact is, there are many, many issues confronting us. As I said to the member of the Conservative Party, the leader of the third party could, in one of her questions, be asking about the round table on murdered and missing aboriginal women that is taking place in Ottawa on Friday. I would have thought that that would be an issue that would be of great concern to the leader of the third party, especially given that her candidate in Sudbury was a First Nations member. I thought that maybe there would be at least one question about what kinds of actions we might expect to come out of that round table.

That's an important issue not just in Ontario, but across the country. I fully expect—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you have repeatedly said that on December 11, you had a conversation with Andrew Olivier and told him you were appointing Glenn Thibeault as your candidate in Sudbury. Pat Sorbara said she was in the room with you when you spoke on the phone to Mr. Olivier. Ms. Sorbara explicitly said she could hear your side of the conversation. But the next day, Ms. Sorbara told Mr. Olivier, "You've been directly asked by the Premier to make a decision to step aside."

Premier, if you had already told Mr. Olivier that you were appointing Mr. Thibeault, then why did Ms. Sorbara continue to ask Mr. Olivier to step aside? If it was a done deal, why the bribe?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'll say what I have said repeatedly, which is that I had decided that Glenn Thibeault was going to be the candidate in Sudbury. I have made that very, very clear.

There is an investigation going on. That investigation is not taking place in this chamber. The investigation is independent. We need to let that investigation unfold.

I will continue to respond to the questions across the floor, but the fact is that the investigation is independent, and it is taking place outside of this chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: You've dragged this chamber and all the members, I say to the Premier, into this mess because you won't restore integrity to your office. You're bringing us all down, and we don't appreciate it. You can say it's independent. True, the police investigation is—and possible charges in that process. But you got us all into this mess because you refuse to do the right thing. You're bringing the art of politics and the honour of politics down; that's why we're going to continue to ask you these questions.

Premier, you said that you told Mr. Olivier on December 11 that you were appointing the candidate. Then on the 12th, Ms. Sorbara said that you were still asking Mr. Olivier to step down. Premier, who's telling the truth about their conversation with Mr. Olivier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just begin by saying, Mr. Speaker, that I have a deep respect for political office. I'm in politics because I believe that government can and must make a difference. I believe that elected officials have a responsibility to advance the causes that brought them into politics in the first place, to do everything that they can to improve the lot of people in their jurisdictions and across this province.

I wouldn't be standing here, I wouldn't be in politics and neither, I believe, would anyone in this House be here if they didn't believe that government could make a difference—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member from Leeds–Grenville and the Minister of the Environment to have a conversation, maybe, elsewhere.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say to the young people who are here for the model Parliament that I am so proud of them for taking part in this. I just want them to know that government can and must make a difference. It must make a positive difference, and it can.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

New question.

1110

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. I certainly hope your example is not one that the model Parliament is going to take away, because that's not the way this place should operate.

Let's get to the question: When Greg Sorbara's name appeared in an RCMP warrant, he resigned from cabinet. But when Pat Sorbara is facing down a criminal investigation, the Premier is keeping her on the job as one of her top aides. Why do different rules apply to Pat Sorbara than applied to Greg Sorbara, and when will you ask Pat Sorbara to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I made a statement on Friday and I was very clear in my position on this. The situation that the member opposite is referencing is a very different situation than the one we are dealing with here.

Let me just repeat: The investigation is not taking place in this House. The investigation is separate. I will continue to answer questions. I will continue to work with the authorities, as we all will.

At the same time, there is such important work to be done. I referenced the round table on Friday on missing and murdered aboriginal women. It is extremely important that provinces come together, that leadership across this country come together, and attempt to work with the federal government. Whether we can work with the federal government to get a national inquiry or, if that's not possible, to at least come together to agree on what some of the concrete actions might be to improve the lot of aboriginal girls and women in this province, that's a very important piece of work that I will be doing while the investigation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, to the Premier: Premier, I've been here for 25 years. In 25 years, we have seen members of cabinet from different governments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I find the decorum unacceptable. When someone is trying to put a question, to mock somebody is not what I call appropriate.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Or anyone else trying to tell me how to do my job.

Please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In the last 25 years, members of every party have faced investigations for one thing or another. Some have been exonerated; some have not. But there's been a tradition that when you're under investigation, you do the right thing and you step aside so you're not acting as a government decision-maker. Why do these rules not apply to Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite actually answered part of the question himself in

the sense that Pat Sorbara is not a sitting member of Parliament. He knows that full well.

I know the member fairly well. He knows that I take this seriously. He knows that I'm going to work with the authorities. He knows very well that the investigation is separate from what goes on in this chamber. There are many, many important issues that we need to be talking about. This is one that obviously is important and we will continue to discuss it, but the investigation is not taking place in this House. It's taking place independently outside of the Legislature.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As all members of the House know, it is quite common for us to hear from constituents about drug funding in Ontario. We are often asked why some drugs are funded by the government and some are not. The question for many is a question that affects their very livelihoods every day. Ontarians need access to certain drugs so they can do the normal things that we take for granted, like go to work, take walks and visit new places in the province. It's important that our government get drug funding right so that constituents like mine in the great riding of Beaches–East York can live the best lives possible, and I know our government is committed to ensuring Ontarians have access to the best and safest treatments available.

I ask the minister if he would please explain the process of drug funding in Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York for the question.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Ontarians have access to the best and the safest drugs and treatments. That's why we took the politics out of those funding decisions; we did that several years ago. Now we rely on experts to determine which drugs are and should be funded. All drugs go through a review by an expert committee which undertakes a thorough evaluation based on the best available evidence.

In fact, in 2010 we introduced a process which now allows patient advocacy groups to make submissions, which are considered by the committee in evaluating a new drug therapy. Based on the committee's advice, the executive officer of the Ontario Public Drug Programs makes a funding decision based on the best interests of patients and the public.

This year our government will spend nearly \$5 billion on more than 3,800 drugs for Ontario patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Minister, for that review.

I was approached by Beaches–East York constituents Lorna Killam and Michael Beirne about a drug called Soliris that provides demonstrated improvements to health and quality of life for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, or aHUS. aHUS is a very rare and life-threatening disease. Their very close friend

Toni Vernon, who is in the House today, has aHUS and needs a life-saving kidney. My constituent Lorna is a match and will donate her kidney, but her doctor asks that Toni be on Soliris before he'll do the operation. Unfortunately, this medication is not currently available to the majority of aHUS patients in Ontario who depend on the government to fund this costly treatment.

In June 2013, Health Canada approved Soliris for use in Canada, but it's not listed. Minister, what is Ontario doing for Ontarians who suffer from aHUS to have access to Soliris?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I was able to say earlier this morning in question period, I was informed earlier this week by the executive officer of Ontario's Public Drug Programs that Ontario will now provide Soliris to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome, or aHUS, who meet the defined clinical criteria of the disease. The aHUS advocacy group was informed of this decision yesterday.

Yesterday we had one member of the PC Party questioning whether we should even be teaching evolution in schools. Now a member of the PC Party is suggesting that our decisions on drug funding need not be based on science. I can't even begin to imagine what may be coming next. Perhaps we never landed on the moon. Perhaps the world is flat after all.

We will continue to rely on evidence to make decisions about what drugs work and for what patients, and I'm happy to make this announcement today.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. The day after you spoke with Mr. Olivier, your deputy chief of staff called him and warned him over the phone that this wasn't about Olivier deciding to run; it was all about Andrew Olivier deciding to say no to the Premier. Of course, Sorbara is referring to him saying no to your request that he step aside. Ms. Sorbara made it clear on that tape that you, Premier, asked Olivier to step aside.

Premier, why do you continue to deny that you asked Mr. Olivier to step aside on December 11?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, let me just say that I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury.

There is an investigation ongoing. That investigation is not taking place in this House. It's an independent investigation that is taking place, and I will continue—we will all continue—to co-operate with it.

I thought, actually, with the Conference Board of Canada report coming out in the last couple of days, that the members opposite, particularly in the PC Party, might have been interested in talking about the economy. What's interesting is that all private sector economists are now forecasting continued growth for the Ontario economy. That's very, very good news. I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to comment further on this.

The Conference Board of Canada's provincial outlook, winter 2015, says: "Ontario's economy is projected to grow by 2.9% this year, bolstered by strong exports and consumer spending." That's very good news.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Premier: The day after Mr. Olivier spoke to you, he spoke with your deputy chief of staff and told her: "I'm looking to seek that nomination." Yet you told us over and over again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Mr. Bill Walker: —that there was going to be no nomination. He said, "And I appreciate the Premier's position." It simply doesn't make sense that Mr. Olivier appreciated your position and then told your deputy chief of staff he was still running if you said there wasn't going to be a nomination.

Premier, are you telling the truth when you say you told Mr. Olivier you were appointing a candidate on December 11?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The court of public opinion ruled, and they chose Glenn Thibeault in Sudbury. They chose Glenn Thibeault because they recognized that we do have challenges before us and that we must continue to invest in skills and in training, invest in infrastructure, invest in maintaining a very dynamic and competitive business climate, and strengthen our retirement security, Mr. Speaker.

1120

They know that we have a lot of work to bring our path to balance, which is achieving its results ahead of targets. They know that we continue to look at our program reviews, that the President of the Treasury Board is doing a fine job, looking at matching our compensation as well, Mr. Speaker—revenue integrity to ensure that everyone pays their fair share—all along exceeding our targets, becoming the lowest-cost government anywhere in Canada and recognizing that we must stay together.

The people of Sudbury ruled on the issue that's before us in this House, recognizing all that was put forward, and they chose a great candidate, Glenn Thibeault.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed both have very similar stories. They both were caught on tape saying that they would like Andrew Olivier to step aside for Glenn Thibeault. In the course of that deliberation they would like to present Olivier with—and I quote Lougheed—"options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever." This is the 26th time the Premier is being asked this question: Who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed the directions to present these options to Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will say once again that I have answered these questions. The investigation is happening outside of this House. I've been

very clear that I take this matter very seriously. I will continue to work with the authorities.

But I thought, actually, that when the member opposite stood up he was going to be asking a question on auto insurance, because we're making progress on auto insurance. I know that the Minister of Finance is going to want to speak to that because I know it's of great concern to the member opposite. And it's just one of the issues that we have to be dealing with as we govern this province, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important that we give regular updates on things like the progress on the reduction of auto insurance premiums.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The question again is to the Premier. The question is really very simple, and instead of answering the question directly, the Premier has repeatedly not answered the question, deflected and referred to a scripted answer. The people of Ontario don't want scripted answers. They don't want speaking notes. They don't want talking points. They want a direct answer. So I'm going to ask the question one more time. This is the 26th time, and I'm hoping the Premier can answer this question directly, for once. Simple question: Who gave the orders to Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I believe, took a law course; I think he's actually a lawyer. Recognizing that, he more than anyone recognizes the process. We are respecting the process and that's exactly what the Premier's doing.

But in regard to auto insurance, which I think he had a passion for, we know that we continue to do what's necessary to reduce auto rates. That's why we have a bill before the House. That's why we're fighting fraud. And, Mr. Speaker, for those who are watching, we have now over a dozen companies reducing their rates by more than 15%. We are on target to do what's necessary because of the actions that were taken. We want to do more, and I hope the member opposite will try to participate in that process as well.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Minister, as you know, today is Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day began in Nova Scotia after a grade 9 boy wore a pink shirt to school. He was mercilessly bullied by schoolmates for looking "gay."

Two thirds of kids who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered feel unsafe at school, and almost three quarters of kids report hearing homosexual slurs at schools every day.

Minister, bullying in our schools and in our society is a widespread problem and is unacceptable, often resulting in devastating emotional, psychological or physical harm on those who are targeted. I know this is an issue that all members in this House feel strongly about. Minister, can you please tell me and tell this House what the

government is doing to combat this deep-rooted and appalling problem?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Happy birthday to the member from Halton.

I'm absolutely thrilled to be able to speak about this issue because it's very important to me. The member is right. Two high school students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, didn't stand by while that grade 9 student was bullied for wearing pink. They went out and bought pink shirts too, and took a brave stand against bullying.

I'm proud to be a member of this Legislature which passed aggressive anti-bullying legislation. I'm also proud that our government recently introduced the revised health and physical education curriculum that brings forward current and relevant issues about bullying. This includes teaching our students about healthy, respectful relationships with their peers and that bullying, under any circumstance, is not okay.

I'm proud that we're all wearing pink today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I thank the Minister of Education for her response and for her thoughtful comments. Those two grade 12 boys went home that night and emailed their friends, and word spread. The next day, the entire school was outfitted in a sea of pink.

Interjection: Nice.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Yes.

These young men changed the culture at their school. In order to combat bullying in schools across this province, we need to change the culture in all of our schools. There have been too many tragic incidents of young people taking their own lives, in part because they could no longer endure the bullying from their peers at school.

I know that the Minister of Education agrees that this is completely unacceptable. We also know that in today's technologically driven world, bullying does not stop at the end of the day.

Minister, could you please inform this House on what your government is doing to combat bullying outside of the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member is absolutely correct. As a government, we have taken action. Ontario took the lead and included cyberbullying as part of the definition of bullying and recognized cyberbullying in our Accepting Schools Act.

Our digital and interconnected world offers students endless positive possibilities. But at the same time, they need to be aware of the potential risks, which is why I am so proud that the recently revised health and physical education curriculum helps children and youth develop skills for online safety by learning about such things as safe and respectful use of technology; social, emotional and legal implications of online behaviour such as sexting; and the potential effects of sexting on relationships and future employment.

Our government has taken action. We've provided bullying-prevention training for up to 25,000 teachers and close to 7,500 principals and vice-principals. We are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim McDonell: My question is to the Premier. In recent months you questioned the integrity of the Auditor General and downplayed the OPP's statements in their ITO. You made allegations against your colleagues across the aisle. Everyone's integrity seems to be fair game for you.

But Premier, when somebody questions your integrity, your deputy stands in the chamber insulting the intelligence of the people of Ontario and painting a flowery picture of your decisions that the public no longer believes.

Premier, when will you demonstrate the integrity of your office and call for the resignation of Gerry Loughheed and Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, once again, I have said repeatedly that there's an investigation ongoing. We will continue to work with the authorities, but we need to let that investigation take place outside this House; it's an independent process. I've been very clear. I've answered these questions many, many times—I made a statement on Friday that is a public statement—but the investigation needs to unfold.

There are many, many things that are confronting us right now, and opportunities. I had the opportunity last Friday morning to attend the athletes' village for the Pan/Parapan American Games that are taking place this summer. It was a wonderful event. It was wonderful because it's an athletes' village, and it's going to be terrific for the 10,000 athletes and coaches who will be there for the Pan/Parapan Games, but there's also a legacy attached to it. I know that the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is going to want to speak to that. It's a very important legacy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Again to the Premier: Your actions don't demonstrate the integrity your colleagues gush about. You continue to stand with your two Liberal operatives who have cast a dark shadow over the Sudbury election and our democracy.

We shouldn't have to remind you to do the right thing, but you seem to have lost your way once again. We launched a petition that thousands of Ontarians have already signed, and Premier, they're asking that you do the right thing by demanding the resignation of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr. until the allegations are resolved. Premier, will you stand up and finally come clean with the people of Ontario?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to acknowledge the member's question. As the member knows, the Premier has answered the question many times.

It gives me a great opportunity, I think, at this point to talk about the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games here in the province of Ontario. I just want to give members an update because we're five months away and I haven't had a question in quite some time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.
Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been able to sell over 275,000 tickets so far. As the Premier mentioned, the athletes' village is completed. It was officially handed over to TO2015 by the contractors and Infrastructure Ontario. We have over 52,000 people who have signed up to volunteer.

Mr. Speaker, this is about building a legacy here in the province of Ontario for future generations of athletes and young people.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Last month, your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, called Andrew Olivier, asking him to stop seeking the Liberal nomination, and in exchange, he was offered a job. Ms. Sorbara said—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Oh, no, this is a good one: "You're like the third person I've even heard her ask this of." Who are the other people Ms. Sorbara was referring to?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, we will work with the authorities. I will continue to work with the authorities. There is an investigation going on, Mr. Speaker. But that investigation is not taking place in this House. That investigation is taking place elsewhere.

I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be the candidate in Sudbury. He is and will be a strong representative for Sudbury in his time here, and we're very, very pleased that he's with us.

The fact is, there is an investigation going on. I take it very seriously, but it's happening outside of this House.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things that we have to be doing at the same time that that investigation is taking place outside of this House, and one of those is investing in the infrastructure that we know is needed in places like Oshawa. It's incredibly important for the greater Toronto and Hamilton area that we make those investments in infrastructure, including transit, and that's exactly the work that's in front of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Speaker, this is the third time that we've asked this question. But maybe the third time is the charm. It seems that the Premier doesn't feel the need to answer, but I'm going to try anyway.

Pat Sorbara told Andrew Olivier that the Premier has called two other people to push them out of the way. If you won't tell us who they are, then I'll ask instead: What were they offered in order to get out of the way?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for that particular question.

As the Premier has said repeatedly in this place and elsewhere, that is an investigation. Those are discussions that are happening elsewhere.

Speaker, over the last few days, I have had the privilege to meet with a number of representatives at the OGRA/ROMA conference, including people from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please.

I'm going to make a comment here—not exactly a ruling, but I'm going to make a comment that the tradition of this place is that the question put deserves attention by the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I'm requesting that the answers come somewhat close to the question.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Premier has had the opportunity many times over the last number of days, as the opposition has been exclusively focused on one particular issue, unfortunately to the neglect of everything else that's important to this community—certainly the member representing the Durham—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, second time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca:—region community should be very happy to know that we continue to proceed with the 407 East extension, for example, and that we continue to invest in GO Transit to her community along the Lakeshore East line, with more to come over the next decade.

I can tell that member that the chair of her region met with me the other day at ROMA/OGRA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: He's very happy with the work we're doing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I need to correct my record—third time.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What does that mean?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It means you're close.

New question.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Investing in research excellence helps support economically important sectors and leads to important discoveries that bring tangible benefits to the people in my riding of Cambridge and all

Ontarians. Thanks in part to strategic investments made by our government, Ontario has emerged as the key global destination for neuroscience research.

Our province has some of the best-educated, hardest-working and most innovative brain researchers and scientists in the world. I understand that with our government's continued support, the Ontario Brain Institute is seamlessly connecting researchers, clinicians and industry to make critical discoveries and deliver innovative, patient-focused treatment. I welcome this, as I have provided nursing care to many of those who are suffering from brain-related issues.

Minister, can you inform the members of this House on how our government is building Ontario up as the global leader in brain research, commercialization and care?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Cambridge for that very good question.

The economic impact of brain and mental health disorders to our economy is \$39 billion a year. That's why investing in patient-focused health care innovation is a critical pillar of our government's economic growth plan.

Our government created the Ontario Brain Institute in 2005. This Premier, after becoming Premier of Ontario in 2013, allocated \$100 million to the Ontario Brain Institute. This funding will help the Ontario Brain Institute to raise \$205 million in additional investments from other sources.

The Ontario Brain Institute is providing strategic brain research and helping to raise Ontario's profile in the world as a leader in brain sciences.

Our government will continue to support leading-edge brain research that will help grow our economy, as well as create high-skilled jobs and improve patient care in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister, for the answer.

I understand that more than two million Ontarians will be affected by brain disorders in their lifetime and that one million Ontarians currently live with depression. As a nurse, I provided care to many constituents and their families in my riding suffering from conditions such as Alzheimer's, autism, depression and Parkinson's. While it's reassuring to know that Ontario has some of the best brain scientists in the world, our government must continue to support dynamic research to improve the treatment of these brain-related disorders.

I understand that you recently announced the latest research projects the Ontario Brain Institute is undertaking thanks in part to our government's investments. Minister, can you inform the members of the House on how these projects will help improve the lives of Ontarians and my constituents in Cambridge who are battling these conditions?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to again thank the member for that very good question.

My ministry is committed to supporting ground-breaking research to help improve the treatment of brain

disorders and diseases. Last month I was joined by my colleague Minister Sergio to announce \$56 million in investments and funding to the Ontario Brain Institute. This funding will support ground-breaking research to help improve treatment and diagnosis of brain diseases and disorders such as depression, Alzheimer's, autism and Parkinson's, and help to get treatment to patients much faster.

Our government will continue to build Ontario's reputation as the world leader in brain-related research, science and innovation.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, I can't help but notice the similarities between your gas plant scandal and your Sudbury scandal. They both centre on closely placed insiders and they both have deputy chiefs of staff involved to do the Liberals' bidding.

You shut down the gas plant scandal committee to protect your insiders in that OPP investigation, and you won't make the insiders in the Sudbury scandal step aside while the OPP investigation carries on. You've developed a culture of entitlement for insiders and a culture of fear for anyone who opposes you.

1140

Premier, why are you protecting the people who are suspects in a criminal investigation, unless the trail leads right back to you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just respond to the first part of that question, which is to say that when I came into this office in 2013, I made it clear, and actually I had made it clear through my leadership bid, that we were going open up the process, that we were going to open up the process that the justice committee was involved in, that the scope of the questions that the justice committee would have access to would be broadened. That happened, Mr. Speaker. There were hundreds of thousands of documents and dozens of witnesses that went in front of that committee. I'm pleased that there has been a report that has been written.

As I did there, with the situation around the Sudbury by-election, I've been very clear. I've been clear in this House; I've been clear outside of this House exactly what I did. I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

There is now an investigation going on. That investigation is going on outside of this House. It is an independent investigation, and I believe we need to let it unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, in your scandals, we learned that the Liberals continue to say one thing but later evidence reveals the truth. In the gas plant scandal we heard under oath, "I have no emails," but the OPP recovered those emails. With Sudbury we heard "No job offer was made," but the OPP turned over taped conversations outlining a job offer.

Premier, there is hard evidence—audiotape recordings—that the decision on your candidate in Sudbury had not been made by mid-December. Now, this is contradictory to what we've heard in this Legislature.

We both know that knowingly contradicting the truth shows contempt for every member of this Legislature. Premier, can you and will you provide this House and the OPP with even one email that corroborates your version of the story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, when I say that the investigation is independent, that's not my opinion; that's a fact, Mr. Speaker. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been retained. It's a process that's happening outside of this House.

Now, I understand as well as the next person the back and forth of question period. But I believe that accusing people of being criminals when there is an investigation going on is wrong. I don't think that's right; I don't think it's fair. I think the honourable members opposite should stop doing that, and I think they should acknowledge that the investigation is happening outside this House and that we need to let it unfold.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. If the Premier has any evidence to support her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal, why won't she share it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the investigation is not taking place in this House. It's not happening here; it's happening outside of this House. It's an independent investigation. It's really important that it be independent. I don't think there's anyone in Ontario who would want to believe that the politicians in this House would be directing that investigation. I think they believe that the authorities need to be allowed to do their work. So that's what I'm going to do, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to co-operate with the authorities, but I am going to let them do their work outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Is the reason that the Premier won't share any evidence to support her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal because there is none?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have stated clearly my position. I've stated it here. I stated it on Friday in a very public statement that is available to anyone who wants to read it. I've said it over and over and over again.

There is an investigation going on. The authorities have a responsibility to undertake that investigation independent of this Legislature. We're going to let them do that, and I will continue to co-operate with them.

ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Madame la Procureure, je sais que vous et votre ministère avez annoncé une nouvelle stratégie pour la province en décembre dernier. Cette

stratégie semble être désignée afin de permettre un accès accru pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes au système de justice. C'est quelque chose qui est très important pour les résidents de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans et moi-même.

J'ai aussi remarqué que plusieurs parties prenantes de la communauté juridique appuient cette approche pour faire avancer le système de justice ontarien.

Est-ce que la procureure générale pourrait clarifier comment cette stratégie fera avancer le système de justice en Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier la députée d'Ottawa-Orléans pour son intérêt dans l'avancement du système de justice en Ontario. Elle a raison de dire que notre stratégie est cruciale à l'avancement de notre système juridique.

L'amélioration de l'accès à la justice a toujours été une priorité clé pour mon ministère. Je prends cette priorité à coeur et mon ministère s'engage à créer un système plus simple, plus rapide et moins cher pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes. C'était d'ailleurs l'une des priorités dans ma lettre de mandat.

Je tiendrai donc une table ronde avec les partenaires clés du secteur de la justice ainsi que la communauté afin de discuter des enjeux auxquels ils font face. Nous travaillerons ensemble afin de surmonter ces obstacles et nous serons, avec nos partenaires, une force de changement positif.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Je remercie la procureure générale pour sa réponse. C'est important pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes que ceci demeure une priorité pour notre gouvernement.

La communauté juridique de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans était très excitée lorsque cette stratégie a été annoncée. Je pense que cela intéresserait beaucoup mes commettants si la procureure générale pourrait élaborer sur certains points de cette stratégie afin d'illustrer de quelle manière celle-ci pourra assurer un accès approprié au système de justice.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci encore à la députée d'Ottawa-Orléans pour sa question. D'abord, nous veillerons à ce que les procédures judiciaires soient plus rapides et que le système de justice soit plus simple à naviguer.

Ensuite, nous permettrons aux participants à la justice familiale d'avoir un accès plus facile à la médiation et à d'autres formes de règlement extrajudiciaire des différends, et nous veillerons à ce qu'ils obtiennent plus facilement les services de soutien et les renseignements nécessaires.

Nous assurerons aussi un appui plus efficace aux personnes ayant des troubles de santé mentale qui entrent en contact avec le système de justice criminelle, y compris aux étapes de la mise en liberté sous caution et du prononcé de la peine.

De plus, il ne faut pas oublier que quoiqu'il ne fasse pas officiellement partie de cette stratégie, le projet pilote à Ottawa sur l'accès à la justice en français aidera aussi

les justiciables francophones à avoir un meilleur accès à la justice dans leur langue.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. According to standing order 37(e), "A minister to whom an oral question is directed may refer the question to another minister who is responsible for the subject matter to which the question relates."

My question to the Premier related to the ongoing investigation into the Sudbury by-election and in no way referenced the Ministry of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got enough of the gist of your point of order. I've dealt with that, as you heard me in the House deal with that. Subsequent to that, I would remind all people asking the questions, and in particular the ministers answering the questions, that even when you refer the question to someone else, it should be answering the question.

MEMBERS' PHOTO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is a reminder for all members, as a result of this morning's failed unanimous consent, that we've all agreed that we would meet on the grand staircase for a photo for those who can make the time to do so, for Pink Shirt Day.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, my father used to say that the next generation is always an improvement on the one that came before. As living proof, in the east gallery today, the newest addition to our family, Vaughan Edward Starr, is here with his parents, Kirsten and Danny. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to introduce my three guests in the east gallery: Dr. Dhun Noria from the Scarborough Hospital; Farokh Noria, her husband; and my good friend Valerie Mah, who is a retired TDSB principal but is now heading the foundation for the Toronto Educational Opportunity Fund. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They're just coming in now, but I'd like to welcome to the House Rebecca and Richard Heessels. They're from my riding, and their little son has aHUS. They're here today advocating for permanent funding for Soliris.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Jessica John, who is from Belle River, and her two sons, Luca Buiza and Julian Buiza,

who are here to listen to the introduction of a petition that Jessica organized in our community.

It also happens to be Luca's fifth birthday today. What a wonderful day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He actually told me he was going to grow a moustache to celebrate.

Further introductions? The member from Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce two very special guests visiting here from Covenant House in Toronto: Julie Neubauer, transitional housing manager, and Erin Boudreau, assistant communications manager. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND FARMS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I am troubled to inform the House that two wind farm projects have been proposed for Merrick and Mattawan townships, in my riding of Nipissing.

We already know that industrial wind turbines have failed in Ontario. Wind power is simply unreliable, made mostly at night when we don't need the power. This creates a surplus that Ontario then has to get rid of by paying Quebec and the United States to take that power. According to the Auditor General, this has cost Ontario around \$2.6 billion more than the revenue we've received exporting that power between 2006 and 2013.

In Nipissing, not only have local First Nations, property owners and aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders voiced their concern about these wind farm installations, but the city of North Bay announced their strong opposition to the wind farm proposal north of the city, due to its proximity to Jack Garland Airport.

Speaker, enough. This government needs to reverse course, cancel the feed-in tariff subsidies, implement an immediate moratorium on wind power development and give municipalities veto authority over wind projects in their communities.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm using my statement today to bring awareness and attention to what is an ongoing labour dispute between Crown Holdings and their employees, who are members of the United Steelworkers.

Crown Holdings forced its 120 Toronto factory workers out on strike in September 2013 after they demanded up to a 42% cut in pay and compensation from Crown Holdings employees. Speaker, they've been on strike for 17 months. For 17 months in this province they've stood to fight for fairness and justice in the workplace, fight for equality and fair compensation from a multinational that has made record profits, that has a very productive facility.

Not only have they done that, but I want to bring attention to a really tragic and unfortunate turn of events

and maybe a twist of fate that saw these Crown Holdings workers take it upon themselves to go and try to find little Elijah Marsh. They had heard that there was a baby who was lost. While they were on the picket line at 4:30 in the morning, they left the picket site. They went and, unfortunately, one of the strikers, David Elines, was one of the people who found Elijah Marsh.

Their job is done, Speaker. They have fulfilled their obligation to fight for their fellow workers and they have also fulfilled an obligation for citizens of this province. I call on the Minister of Labour to understand what is happening there, to pay attention to it and to intervene to end this strike. It's unnecessary.

CIVIC AWARDS

PRIX CIVIQUES

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud today to recognize two individuals and one organization from my community of Ottawa-Orléans for promoting the French language and francophone culture.

Le 3 février dernier, Sylvie Lamoureux fut décorée de la plus haute distinction décernée par la province, l'Ordre de l'Ontario, en reconnaissance de son excellence et de sa réussite dans le secteur de l'éducation postsecondaire en français. Professeure à l'Institut des langues officielles et du bilinguisme de l'Université d'Ottawa, elle s'est particulièrement démarquée par sa recherche portant sur le vécu postsecondaire des étudiants francophones.

Le 12 février, Nicole Fortier fut reconnue pour ses 35 ans d'engagement à la francophonie ontarienne en se voyant décerner le Prix Bernard-Grandmaître par l'ACFO Ottawa lors de leur gala annuel. Elle s'est distinguée par son dévouement, son implication au sein d'organismes et sa persévérance à l'avancement et à l'épanouissement de la francophonie.

Finalement, la Société franco-ontarienne du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans recevait, le 16 février dernier, le Prix Roger-Bernard. Leur présidente, Nicole Fortier, et leur vice-président, Louis Patry, ont accepté le prix au nom de l'organisme pour sa contribution à la préservation et à la mise en valeur d'éléments du patrimoine de l'Ontario français.

Congratulations again to these three amazing individuals. You have made our community very proud.

VETERANS

Mr. Bill Walker: Seven decades ago, Alf Meyer, Art Haley and Ray Campbell helped liberate France in the Second World War. Seventy years since joining the thousands of brave men and women who stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, the veterans were honoured by the French government for their courageous efforts.

I'm honoured to rise in the House today to recognize Mr. Meyer, Mr. Haley and Mr. Campbell, all constituents of my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, for

receiving the highest decoration the French government can give: knights of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour.

The French people will never forget the bravery Mr. Campbell, Mr. Meyer, Mr. Haley and other Canadians showed during the war. These men now officially join the knighthood rank of the First World War flying ace Billy Bishop, who was another native of my great riding and a recipient of this order.

There were 390 Canadian D-Day veterans on whom the government of France bestowed this award on the 70th anniversary of D-Day. In the words of the ambassador of France to Canada, Philippe Zeller, all these gentlemen “can proudly wear this insignia, which attests to their courage and their devotion to the ideals of liberty and peace.”

The French order was established by Napoleon Bonaparte more than 200 years ago and is the highest order of merit, much like our own Order of Canada. The order continues today and it also serves as a reminder of the friendship between Canada and France.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me in expressing our respect, admiration and pride in our peacekeepers and soldiers and knights for their heroic deeds.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, the city of Hamilton is suffering a housing crisis. Nearly 6,000 families are on a waiting list for subsidized housing. One in five renter households spend more than half their income on rent. They have little left over for their food and bills.

The investment in an affordable housing program—which this government praises to the skies—will support just 100 new units over the next 10 years, less than 3% of the need just to meet the population growth.

Thanks to downloading, over the next 20 years, Hamilton needs more than \$400 million just to maintain the social housing we have. People who are homeless and living in unstable housing are at high risk of physical and mental health problems. They have a hard time accessing health care. They experience hunger and unemployment. They are more likely to be victims of assault.

1510

Investing in housing is the right thing to do. It is the fiscally responsible thing to do. It is cheaper to provide people with safe and adequate housing than to manage homelessness with shelters and services.

Hamilton is paying more than its share for affordable housing and homelessness prevention programs. In 2013, Hamilton taxpayers paid 52% of the cost out of the property tax levy; Ontario paid a mere 21%. Even the federal government paid more. It's time for this government to honour its moral obligations to the city of Hamilton and my constituents who need help.

PAT ROSEBRUGH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my great pleasure to rise today to recognize a remarkable woman in my riding

of Cambridge. Pat Rosebrugh is being presented with the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Lifetime Achievement this Friday. I could not be more proud. Pat is my mentor, my friend and a passionate heritage advocate who deserves such an honour.

Pat has been a leader in local heritage conservation since the 1960s. Inspired to take action after seeing a local landmark at risk of demolition, Pat organized the community to conserve one of the oldest public buildings in Ontario, thus beginning her lifelong commitment to heritage conservation.

What began as a few concerned individuals grew to become a visionary organization of volunteers in ACO Cambridge, championing the preservation of the rich stock of built and natural heritage in Cambridge. She played a critical role in raising awareness of the value of Cambridge's cultural heritage resources. She continues to inspire and challenge others to take a more active role in the preservation of our historic buildings and cultural landscapes.

Pat has been recognized with an Award of Excellence by the Waterloo Region Heritage Foundation, and was inducted into the Cambridge Hall of Fame in 2014 and the Waterloo Region Hall of Fame, as part of Heritage Cambridge, in 2014.

Congratulations, Pat, on your lifetime achievement award.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Over the last few months, I've spoken with farmers and agricultural associations throughout Perth-Wellington. Many are very upset about this government's plan to ban the use of neonicotinoid pesticides. They've moved ahead with no consultation and no thought for what this will mean to farmers. It's as if farmers were not even an afterthought for them.

Farmers are the best stewards of our land. They are committed to protecting the environment that they live and work in. People tell me they supported the investigation into the effects of neonics because they want to be using the most environmentally sound practices on their land. However, what we are seeing now are policy decisions being made without the scientific evidence to back them up.

Farmers need to control insect pests to maintain their crops. Speaker, I have farmed, and let me tell you, we do not want to be going back to the pesticides that have been used in the past. I must support the agriculture industry in its call for this government to talk with agricultural stakeholders and the pollinator task force to come up with solutions that protect pollinators and the environment. The best way to protect our environment is to make policy based on science, not political science.

COVENANT HOUSE TORONTO

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to bring awareness and celebration to Covenant House Toronto, as

February is Covenant House Awareness Month. Covenant House Toronto, which is part of an internationally recognized child care network, has offered opportunity and hope to over 90,000 homeless young people for more than 30 years.

While most of these youth have experienced abuse, neglect, loss and hardship, their needs when they come to Covenant House can be extremely diverse. These young people are often in need of stability, guidance and opportunity to heal and feel ready to take on the future.

Much more than a shelter, Covenant House offers about 3,000 kids annually the widest range of life-changing services under one roof, including transitional housing onsite and in the community, education, counselling, health care, employment assistance, job training and aftercare.

To do all this, the agency relies on donors for about 80% of its annual budget. The agency specifically chose February for its campaign as it's traditionally the coldest winter month and when kids most need a safe refuge. It also marks the anniversary of Covenant House Toronto's opening in 1982.

Covenant House Toronto's second annual Covenant House month this February aims to raise awareness and funds to help homeless youth. I, along with the rest of my riding, am extremely proud of the hard work, dedication and advocacy of Covenant House Toronto. I stand today inviting all Ontarians to celebrate Covenant House Awareness Month.

DHUN NORIA

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize my good friend Dr. Dhun Noria, who was recently awarded the province's highest honour, the Order of Ontario. Dr. Noria received this prestigious honour for her unwavering commitment and steadfast dedication to Scarborough Hospital—where she's the chief of laboratory medicine—the Ontario medical community and Scarborough itself.

Her work in the community is a source of inspiration. Dr. Noria serves on the Toronto Police Services Board, has been a member of the board of governors for Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care since 1996, and was a former chair of the Metro Toronto District Health Council.

For over 30 years, Dr. Noria has done an outstanding job to support this diverse urban community called the Scarborough Hospital. As a two-time survivor of breast cancer, she knows Ontario's health care system firsthand. Not even a diagnosis of cancer could slow her down.

Dr. Noria's remarkable commitment in the community has been recognized by a number of organizations. In 2014, she received a lifetime achievement award from the Scarborough Hospital Foundation. Dr. Noria also received the Ontario Medical Association's president's award for outstanding services by a physician to the community and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee award. She

was inducted into the Scarborough Walk of Fame in 2011 and has been named as a local Toronto hero by the Canadian Multicultural Council.

I'd like to thank Dr. Noria for everything she's done for the Scarborough Hospital, for the medical community and for Ontario.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to move motions without notice or debate respecting appointments of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Financial Accountability Officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward motions without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First, I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Brian Beamish as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for a term of five years, commencing on March 2, 2015, as provided in section 4 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, RSO 1990, c. F. 31."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that an humble address be presented—do we ask for dispense? Agreed? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

APPOINTMENT OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Stephen LeClair as the Financial Accountability Officer for a term of five years, commencing on March 2, 2015, as provided in section 2 of the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013, SO 2013, c. 4."

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Moved by Mr. Bradley. Do we have a dispense request? Agreed? Dispense. Do we have agreement of the House? Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm proud to stand in the House today, on behalf of Ontario's two million students, to acknowledge Pink Shirt Day. We know that a safe, inclusive and accepting school environment is essential for students to succeed in the classroom and beyond, and it is the responsibility of everyone in our schools and local communities to promote respectful and caring relationships that support the cognitive, emotional, social and physical development of our children and students.

That is why today thousands of students and educators across Ontario and across Canada will be recognizing Pink Shirt Day. Pink Shirt Day was inspired in 2007 by two high school students from Nova Scotia, David Shepherd and Travis Price. When they discovered that a male classmate was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school, they decided to take action. They went to a nearby store and bought pink shirts to give out to students, and they reached out to their fellow students to get them on board. The next day, many students were wearing the purchased shirts, and hundreds wore their own pink clothing. When the teen who was being bullied arrived at school, he was overwhelmed by the show of support.

Now, Pink Shirt Day has become an annual event to speak out against bullying in schools, communities and workplaces. Our government has led the way by developing strong legislation such as the Accepting Schools Act, and resources for school boards to address bullying and victimization through prevention, intervention and supports.

The Accepting Schools Act, which passed in 2012, was the first legislation of its kind in Canada. This important legislation is helping to make every school in Ontario a safe, inclusive and accepting place to learn, while at the same time ensuring that every student has the support to reach their full potential.

On Monday, our government took further steps toward ending bullying by releasing the revised, up-to-date health and phys-ed curriculum. We need to update our curriculum so that students understand the importance of things like healthy, respectful relationships, having the confidence to say "no," safe use of technology and the Internet to help eliminate cyberbullying, developing inclusive communities, and mental health.

As Ontarians, we must all work together.

Many schools and school communities are already demonstrating leadership in fostering and maintaining positive school climates through whole-school approaches that engage all members of the school community. I want to thank our educators, students and school communities for their leadership and commitment

in creating safe, inclusive and accepting school environments that are essential for student achievement and well-being.

This is also fundamental for our renewed vision for education. Our vision will help prepare our students to achieve excellence for a productive and successful future. But students can't properly focus on their future if they are afraid to go to school. We know that bullying and intimidation have an immediate negative impact on student well-being and their ability to succeed in school.

That is why, Speaker, Pink Shirt Day is so important. It's an opportunity to remind us all that everyone has a part to play in creating a positive school climate and in fostering healthy and respectful relationships. Those efforts must not be limited to a single day, but instead woven into day-to-day practices and embedded in the culture of the school.

I encourage every member in the House today to recognize Pink Shirt Day and to continue to promote the well-being of our students, so that everyone feels respected, accepted and valued. Today, let's use this opportunity to come together, to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's children, students and families.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and tell you that this Saturday coming up, February 28, is the annual International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. A lot of people will ask what that is or will say, "We didn't know that we had an awareness day." But I can tell you from the people I've spoken to, Speaker, anybody who has had a repetitive strain injury will tell you very, very clearly why we need this day.

The goal of this day is to raise awareness of the debilitating nature of repetitive strain injuries and ways we can all prevent them.

Each year we mark Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day to promote the avoidance of such injuries, which, while they may not be life-threatening, can certainly be painfully life-altering.

At the Ministry of Labour, and throughout Ontario's health and safety system, we use a broader term: musculoskeletal disorders, or MSDs for short. This term describes the injuries and disorders of the musculoskeletal system that can be caused or aggravated by not only repetitive work but also by forceful exertions, fixed or awkward postures, vibration and other physical causes.

Regardless of what we call these injuries, preventing them is always better than trying to cure them after the fact. These injuries take a tremendous toll on our workforce. They account for more than 40% of all lost-time injuries that are allowed by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

If you look beyond the pain, the suffering, the social, emotional and economic costs to affected individuals, you'll also see there are economic costs to MSDs to all of us, estimated at more than \$26 billion annually. I think

we can do better than this. These injuries, for the most part, are entirely preventable. Ontario workers and employers have numerous resources to help protect against these often painful MSDs. These resources can be found through my ministry, through the WSIB, through all our health and safety partners across this province and the many other sources that are interested in workers' health and safety in Ontario.

Year-round, the Ministry of Labour and its partners continue to enforce workplace legislation, to raise awareness of hazards in the workplace, to train workplace parties, and we also research the issue of MSDs and how we can further prevent them. Now, when we go and do a workplace visit, the ministry's occupational health and safety inspectors focus on a number of things: They look at ensuring that those workplaces have a functioning internal responsibility system; they identify the hazards in the workplace, and that includes MSD hazards; as well, they ensure compliance with our existing health and safety legislation.

Ministry of Labour occupational health and safety inspectors also receive training in MSD hazard recognition. All employers in the province of Ontario are responsible under the Occupational Health and Safety Act for taking every precaution that's reasonable under the circumstances to protect the health and the safety of their workers. This includes protection from workplace hazards that can lead to these disorders. Ministry inspectors and ergonomists issue orders under the act and the regulations that accompany that act. They require employers to implement measures addressing MSD hazards for ergonomic assessments and related preventive measures, complete ergonomic assessments in the workplace, and provide worker training to prevent MSDs.

The government is committed to reducing MSDs right here in the province of Ontario. We know there remains much more to do. We must continue to create that positive change in a collaborative way, in co-operation with both the workers and the employers in this province. We must continue to promote a culture of prevention in the province. I'm convinced that if we all work together we can achieve that goal we all want; that being safer, healthier workplaces right throughout the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to add my comments regarding Pink Shirt Day. Bullying is, without a doubt, a serious issue that continues to plague our society and, quite frankly, has been amplified by anonymous social media activities.

1530

Pink Shirt Day is a public and symbolic symbol of everyone coming together to fight for a common cause: putting an end to bullying. I'm proud that Ellwood Memorial Public School, in my riding of Dufferin-

Caledon, has chosen to designate the last Thursday of every month as Pink Thursdays, in which students wear a pink shirt to support anti-bullying campaigns.

But it has gone much beyond schools, to politicians, businesses, police and firefighters. Orangeville Police Service's Chief Wayne Kalinski and Constable Scott Davis are participating today by wearing a pink uniform, all because, in 2007, two young men in Nova Scotia said, "Enough is enough. Bullying must stop."

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm responding on behalf of the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

It's my honour to rise today in this Legislature to recognize Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. Repetitive strain injuries begin as minor injuries but often lead to far more serious chronic pain. Thankfully, these injuries are now recognized and protected by the WSIB and codified within our laws.

I am proud that we, as a society and as legislators, have recognized the seriousness of this issue. We know that it happens in many, many jobs. We all have done a good job at raising awareness of the pain these injuries can lead to and, as a result, have greatly mitigated these injuries in the workplace.

I hope we can continue to raise awareness about these injuries. Every bit we do can help stop these highly preventable injuries.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Along with my colleagues, I stand to acknowledge today's recognition of Pink Shirt Day. As the Minister of Education noted in her remarks, it was students standing up for a classmate in Nova Scotia that made this a day for human rights, a day to oppose transphobia and homophobia.

Many students have fought over the decades for safe, secure and bigotry-free schools. Trans and gay students have taken risks, taken a lead and made a difference. However, it's very clear that this is a battle, a change that has not yet been fully won. It means there's much more for society as a whole to do and for individual schools and educators to do.

I have to say that in my riding of Toronto-Danforth, Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto runs the Triangle Program, a high school for LGBTQ youth that has been a refuge for many who have had more difficulty in their schools than they could handle in that school. I appreciate the fact that it has been supported by the province of Ontario. I appreciate the fact that the church itself has taken a leadership role in making sure that the facilities are there, that the doors are open and that students who come there feel that sense of security, safety and belonging that, unfortunately, all too often, they don't feel in other places.

It's incumbent on us, on a day like today, to remind everyone in this society that this kind of bigotry is

unacceptable, and to say that teaching in our schools that people have different gender identities and different gender orientations, and that that is entirely a part of our human nature—it's important for us to do that and move it forward through this society.

Again, today we should acknowledge those who stood up years ago on this day to make a difference, and acknowledge and recognize everyone who today is standing up, taking risks and making a difference.

REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to rise to recognize Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. It has been 16 years since Ontario first recognized Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day. In Ontario, approximately 40% of all lost-time injury claims at the WSIB are as a result of repetitive strain injuries or musculoskeletal disease, and we still certainly have a way to go.

I want to give members of the Legislature a little bit of a preview, a window, into a day in the life of somebody who has a repetitive strain injury. I want to share with you parts of a letter sent to me from Catherine Fenech, who is the founder of the International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day.

Catherine says, "An injury stays with you 24/7. It doesn't end when work is over. A typical day can easily get derailed by pain and/or depression that makes it difficult to accomplish anything."

She says she usually doesn't get up until mid-morning. She struggles all night to sleep. When she finally drags herself out of bed, she's groggy from not having slept, and stiff all day.

These days, she says, she hopes it doesn't snow, because she struggles with shovelling. She can't afford to pay for help, so she usually just struggles to get the minimum done and pays the price in pain later.

She says her house is a mess. She can't keep up with projects that are undone.

"WSIB was a nightmare to deal with, and the system has gotten worse." It took five years for them to recognize her injury. She doesn't know if she can deal with the stress of continuing to pursue WSIB again for very little benefits, and there's always the downside risk that they'll take away more benefits.

She would love to go back to work, but they won't provide a proper ergonomic environment for her to work in. Psychologically, she is a mess. She can't deal with the battles she continues to have with WSIB and her employers to accommodate her injury. The stress of having no money, chronic pain, sleeplessness and having to fight for what is right has left her unable to concentrate and focus. She struggles each and every day.

Speaker, this is emblematic—symptomatic—of a failure of this government to actually do anything when it comes specifically to repetitive strain injury—something that's all too common in our workplaces—but more broadly, injured workers in general, when they have to deal with the WSIB.

It's all good to dedicate a day, and I'm sure we all understand the challenges that people face with workplace injuries. But, my goodness, let's do something, put our efforts forward, ensure that WSIB actually functions as it should and was designed: to compensate workers when they are injured on the job; not to ostracize them and not to marginalize them, but to actually help them get back to work in a proactive way, to support them and their families, so that they can be functional members of society.

The system is broken. The Liberals have destroyed it over the past decade. It's not getting any better. If you don't do anything soon, you're going to have an RSI day every day, because the front lawn of the Legislature will be jam-packed with injured workers who are demanding justice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm standing here today to present a petition on behalf of a family that is here advocating today for permanent funding of Soliris. It reads like this:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name and send it to the desk with Morgan.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my honour to introduce this petition today, which has been organized by our guests who are here today, Jessica John and her colleague Heather MacDonald-Ellis, who have done an incredible

job in raising awareness about the need for a national and provincial automotive strategy.

This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I couldn't agree more. I will affix my name to this petition and send it to the Clerks' table with page Victoria.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to bring a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

1540

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I believe the minister already talked about this thing today. I support the petition and I give it to Madison.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase to the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

"Whereas Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

"Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To support Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition. I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Inaya.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Of course, I'm pleased to stand in the Legislature on behalf of the people from Oshawa who have a vested interest in the automotive industry, so I'm pleased to read this petition.

"Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I am pleased to affix my name to this, and I will send it to the table with page Riley.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, I have a petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use the tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

Speaker, I'll send this to the table with Muntder.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions received from Northern Import Towing in Huntsville, Ontario, in support of the "Move Over" legislation.

The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Highway Traffic Act requires drivers of a motor vehicle to slow down upon approaching an emergency vehicle that is stopped on the same side of a highway as that on which the driver is travelling; and

"Whereas over 40 states in the United States and five provinces in Canada have included roadside assistance workers in 'Slow Down, Move Over' legislation, providing protection for tow trucks assisting motorists; and

"Whereas everyone deserves a safe place to work;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to safety precautions to take when approaching roadside assistance vehicles."

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition and will sign it.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to introduce this petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada

resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

As the member from Windsor West, who proudly brags about our great automotive sector, I will sign this and give it to page Hannah.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians on Ontario's roads and making the province North America's most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

"Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

"Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that Ontario's impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, 2014."

I fully support it, Mr. Speaker, and I give my petition to Niko.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, has completed his investigation in Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed's actions prior to the Sudbury by-election; and

"Whereas Mr. Essensa's investigation concluded that he is 'of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent

contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act'; and

"Whereas 'no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery'; and

"Whereas no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of their office to the Attorney General; and

"Whereas the actions of the staff in Office of the Premier and Liberal insiders have brought dishonour to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request Premier Wynne demand the temporary resignation of Patricia Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed Jr. until the allegations are resolved."

I hope they treat this better than they did this morning's question. I will pass it off to Natalie.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: I would like to add a petition.

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and
1550

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I wholeheartedly agree with this, and I will give it to page Dhairya.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Scarborough-Agincourt is one of the few ridings without a ServiceOntario office in the riding;

"Whereas some residents of Scarborough-Agincourt live outside the maximum service area of the nearest ServiceOntario office;

"Whereas Scarborough-Agincourt is home to a growing population of seniors, the oldest community in Scarborough, many of whom are mobility-impaired or have limited access to transportation;

"Whereas residents have filed numerous complaints with the constituency office about long wait times, inconvenient hours and the inaccessibility of the closest ServiceOntario office;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government of Ontario to open a ServiceOntario office in Scarborough-Agincourt to allow its residents and businesses easy and efficient access to government services."

Mr. Speaker, I support the petition. I'll give my petition to page Victoria.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I agree with this. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Julie.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 24, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi

exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: The ORPP is marketed as a mandatory tool to make Ontarians save for their retirement. Savings are what taxpayers have after paying taxes, utilities, rent or mortgages, insurance and food for their families. Premier Wynne's policies have driven up the costs of all of these essential components of a family's budget, eroding our disposable income and thus preventing Ontarians from being able to save.

Taxes: Well, they've doubled. The debt's up, and there's no plan to tackle the huge rising cost of servicing the debt.

Utilities: They're up, too. Hydro has more than doubled since the government took over and is forecast to go up another 68% in the next 20 years because of the Green Energy Act.

Rent: It has increased because of utilities and massive cuts to municipal transfers. My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry alone has seen close to a million-dollar cut in OMPF funding.

Insurance: Ontario pays the highest rates for car insurance, especially in the GTA. This is strangling our economic hub.

Food: Wynne's new proposed carbon tax will drive up the cost of producing, transporting and packaging the food we buy, and will hit the most vulnerable disproportionately.

When the Liberals take money out of Ontarians' pockets, they deprive Ontarians of the ability to invest their savings into their chosen retirement options, which include RRSPs and tax-free savings accounts.

When polled, most Ontarians say that they would like to save more for retirement. Premier Wynne is of the opinion that she can just force them to and the savings will happen. This is both patronizing and arrogant. Pension contributions and other retirement savings tools serve two purposes: to ensure an income during old age and to shield current and medium-term income from taxation.

By contributing to our RRSP, we usually forego the enjoyment of a higher income that would be taxed at a higher bracket, to have it returned to us later, taxed at a lower rate. With a TFSA the argument is simple: to shield from the tax man capital gains made from our savings.

In 2013, the last taxation year available, Ontario's total employed workforce numbered approximately 7.3 million, according to Stats Canada. During the same taxation year, 2.2 million contributed to an RRSP, less than one third, despite the tax incentives of doing so. The ORPP would not offer workers or the province added value, because it would not complement the benefits of RRSP, CPP and TFSA contributions; it would only substitute voluntary and personally managed retirement savings with a mandatory and unaccountable program that will not pay a cent for decades.

Moreover, the ORPP would substitute itself for federal income security programs—that is, Old Age Security and the guaranteed income supplement—since its payouts would be clawed back from those programs. Forty years from now, retired Ontarians are likely to find themselves poorer overall by having been deprived of some of the necessities and/or perks their lost income would have provided.

Premier Wynne complains that Ontarians aren't saving enough for retirement, but figures prove her wrong. According to Statistics Canada, private pension holdings in Ontario increased by 47% between 2005 and 2012. Ontarians have doubled their holdings in mutual funds and more than doubled their stocks, and they have made significant investments in real estate property.

The one common characteristic of all these contributions to net worth is that Premier Wynne doesn't have an easy way of dipping into these reserves to finance her government's spending addiction. She therefore needs a new revenue stream with little to no built-in accountability and the floodgate keys in the Premier's office.

The entire purpose of a pension plan and any long-term investment is to lock the funds in and reap the benefits in many years' time. But by the same token, long-term bonds pay a higher rate than short-term ones—the investor is rewarded for confidence and patience. In their first speech on the subject, however, the government makes it clear that the purpose of the ORPP is to be unlocked by the same government that wasted billions on eHealth, power plants and Ornge, and throws good money after bad.

The Liberals have been very open about their intention to use the ORPP for purposes completely unrelated to Ontarians' retirement security. Behind buzz words like "unlocking assets" lies the naked truth that the ORPP would be nothing more than a political slush fund. Moreover, if a supposed toll highway was built with pension money, Ontarians would pay twice—once for the contribution and again through the toll—but receive only a pittance back. This is worse than a Ponzi scheme; even the early participants lose.

Ontarians need this government to leave more money in their pockets so they can save it better than Premier Wynne can ever be trusted to. It is her government that has made life less affordable in this province. A look at household expenditures in Ontario between 2010 and 2013 shows this. Ontarians would save more if this government allowed them to. Instituting another mandatory payroll tax is not the answer, because the money isn't there.

The ORPP will impact small businesses disproportionately. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported that over 80% of small businesses are opposed to the ORPP and would face difficult choices if it was implemented. Two thirds would consider freezing or cutting salaries to account for the extra contribution, while more than half would scale back on their capital investments or their workforce. When businesses can't invest in new equipment, new locations, new employees and training, we all suffer.

1600

This government's intention to grind Ontario to a halt by removing capital from the economy, whether through taxes, fees, inflated utility prices or the ORPP, hurts the economy. If we boost Ontarians' earnings and create jobs for the 600,000 unemployed who need our greatest help to return to the workforce, we begin by leaving more money in Ontarians' hands to spend, save and invest according to personal plans and preferences.

I do not believe for a minute that the Premier or any other government official can know what's best for residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry 40 years from now. Every worker adapts their savings and investment patterns to long-term goals.

There are always ways to stimulate savings and offer more opportunities for Ontarians to shield income from taxation in order to save for retirement. The mandatory job-killing and unaccountable ORPP, however, embodies the worst defects of the Liberal government: over-reaching, patronizing and downright greedy.

We were talking today about a petition on a new Ford plant in western Ontario. Companies are leaving because of payroll taxes. This is another payroll tax. Studies show that this will cost 160 man-years of employment. This is employment when we're trying to help out the people in greatest need, people who are looking for a job today.

We talk about the 600,000. This increases that number. It reduces the revenue that the government has available to them. People who are now retired or unemployed will not see any benefit from this. People who pay into it will not see benefits for many years. It is money that's taken out of the economy. We think we should be investing in the economy and we shouldn't be removing money and putting more stress on our businesses.

An agri-food business in western Ontario is leaving and expanding in Michigan. He quotes two issues: the payroll taxes—he actually mentioned the ORPP—and energy costs. These are direct impacts of this government.

It's time that we start looking at what's best for this province and start looking at putting in plans that actually get people working again—favourable for labour and employers to actually work together as a team, investing in our future. We need to put more money into education. Instead of closing colleges, we should be looking at opening them and maintaining some of the programs we have.

I hear them talk about the importance of the agri-food industry, arguably our number one job generator in this province. The impact, though, is that we closed the only English-language college in eastern Ontario and put the French-language college certainly in jeopardy. We're waiting to see. We just have to turn the scales and do what's right for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to rise today to contribute to the debate for the member opposite. He mentioned something about affordability, that things are

going up and employers are struggling to pay bills. But also, the everyday person is struggling to pay bills.

I particularly draw the attention of seniors. I was at an event last night, a community kitchen, and they were talking about what kind of people need the community kitchen. Seniors came up because there's a lot of female seniors who are widowed. They used to have two pensions when their husband—or partner or spouse—was alive, but now they're down to one pension. They're really struggling because they didn't have these great jobs that paid a good retirement plan or pensions. They are getting their CPP and the Old Age Security and anything they can max out, but they're still having trouble paying the rent and they're still having trouble buying groceries.

What the London community is doing, and I'm sure many communities across the province, is they have these community kitchens. For this particular example that I went to, for \$25 people come together—all the food is purchased—and they create meals in this kitchen, and you go home with 25 servings for \$25. What I've heard is that, first of all, it's a great thing to get seniors out of their home and socialize. Besides that, there are benefits because the cost of food is going up. Seniors can't afford nutritious meals. So that was a help.

The socialization piece, the affordability piece and the nutrition piece—so when we talk about pensions and we talk about seniors, affordability is a huge issue. We have to do better in the future for our seniors when it comes down to retiring with dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I am pleased to rise and comment on the debate on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. I couldn't help noticing that in the comments that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry made, and a few of the other members opposite, they were complaining that when you contributed to this plan you wouldn't actually get any money out for a long time. Well, Speaker, that's what pension plans are. You contribute over the course of your working life so that you can take the money out when you retire. That's how pension plans are actually supposed to work.

What we know is that there are a lot of studies out there that Ontarians aren't saving enough to actually maintain their standard of living in retirement, or in some cases, as the member before me just mentioned, are struggling to buy food. There have been three studies that have been released in the last few weeks that highlight this. One I was listening to on TV the other night that caught my attention was a poll that RBC had just released a few days ago. They talked about the fact that only 39% of respondents had put away any money for their retirement in 2014, and that 30% of the respondents had never put away any money for their retirement. We know that if that's the case, that if people aren't saving for their retirement, they're not going to have enough money to live on when they retire. The average payout by the Canada Pension Plan is only \$6,800. Of course, you

can't live on that when you retire. We need to help people save.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? There are two of you. The member from Simcoe North.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I apologize. My apologies to my colleague from North Bay.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're getting along.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He's one of the ones I get along with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Bill 56, commenting to the member from Stormont, my main concern—I'm hearing it from small business operators across the province—just as recently as Monday morning, I had a meeting with colleges and universities in Ontario and they have a real concern on the undergraduate students working at the universities. I have put this on the record because I think it's important that it's on there. It will cost the undergraduate students 1.9% and the university 1.9% as well, so a total of 3.8%. What they're telling me is, this is a budget that is already as tight as it can possibly be and they're asking me to ask the minister. I'm not sure if this government will move this thing forward right to 2018 or not or they'll actually listen to the public and possibly make major changes or even withdraw it. I know this is going to have an impact on a lot of jobs across the province, but if we could at least listen to this one point, and that's the fact that university undergraduate students, who get very few hours to begin with—this is a lot of money out of their pockets, the total of 3.8%. They're asking us to pass this on because this amount of money has basically been frozen for a number of years now. They're actually saying, "Please listen to us. It's something we can't absorb." If the government could listen to that, it just adds to the comments that were made by the member, Mr. McDonell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to address the comments from the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

1610

I listened with rapt attention and I do find it interesting how very different the arguments can be on the same issue. But one of the things that the member mentioned as a concern—I think we would echo the same concern about unlocking value from government assets and the threat of potential use of funds for government purposes other than for retirement. That is something, as we have said before, that we would encourage the government to reassure us of, that that money is going to be further than arm's-length, that it cannot be used for a nefarious purpose or for any other government purpose other than for retirement.

Another interesting point that the member raised was that Ontarians would save more if the government allowed them to. I'm sure we all have heard from our constituents who are struggling with their hydro bills and

struggling to afford health care costs now, insurmountable education debt, child care costs, dental costs, any number of things that are just adding to the financial burden pile of Ontarians. They are having a difficult time saving, and so this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is an important piece in giving opportunities for those who are not able to, who have not been saving to this point.

When we talk about long-term goals and we talk about retirement, it is a big picture on how everyone fits together in this economy. We've talked about that before, that everyone deserves a chance to participate in that economy, and businesses, of course, will be impacted now, but imagine the shape they'll be in when no one is able to participate and come through their doors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to thank the members from London—Fanshawe, the Minister of Education, Simcoe North and Oshawa for their comments. A lot of it was around the funds our seniors have. I see in our own community that that's a big problem. Food is not readily available for many of them. Food bank uses are way up.

But you look at the costs of necessities that have gone up: hydro costs, property taxes. One of the investments that is very key to our seniors is the fact that, in many cases, they own their own homes. That's going to be less affordable in the future; now we're taking money away that could go to mortgages that are paid off over 20 or 30 years. That reduces the amount of income they have. There is a fear that when you're putting money into some of these volunteer programs or even the pension plans—they typically go into the highest rate of return. These are being put into pools of money that will be accessible by the government. Hopefully, in the future, the government will have the money to pay it back. But we've seen governments around the world that have spending like this one that haven't had the money to pay it back. You go to Greece; pensions were exhausted. That's the fear.

The other issue that I'm raising is that these will not be accessible for many years, because they've made many of the people who are having trouble today think that this will benefit them. Seniors who are needing more money today are looking at a hope from this legislation, but there's nothing farther from the truth, because they will not benefit from it. Many of the people who are having trouble today are unemployed today. They will not benefit either. The people they are helping are the people who are contributing to their own pension plans, hopefully at a higher rate than will be guaranteed through this government, which is only interested in getting money at the cheapest rate and able—I mean, with Moody's latest credit downgrade, there may not be money there on the market for them to borrow in the future.

I want to thank everybody for the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I stand to represent the people of London–Fanshawe as the MPP for London–Fanshawe. I'd like to speak to Bill 56, entitled the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. It's second reading that we have right now.

While I wholeheartedly agree that we must work toward ensuring all Ontarians will be able to live with dignity and respect in their retirement years, I am concerned about how we are moving forward to achieve this goal. In a report tabled this past December by Statistics Canada, the data shows that 12% of our seniors live in poverty, amounting to almost 600,000 people. Seniors living alone are particularly hard-pressed financially, with more than one in four single seniors, most of whom are women, living in poverty. Given that most retirement experts recommend that we aim to replace 50% to 70% of our income in retirement to maintain a similar living standard, the real question becomes: How are we going to achieve this goal?

Obviously, enhancing the Canada Pension Plan is the best possible option. However, the Harper government stubbornly refused to consider it. Five years later, this government has finally come to understand what New Democrats have been saying: that if we want it, we must take this challenge right here at the provincial level.

Yet the numbers do not favour us. In Ontario, the majority of workers do not belong to a workplace pension plan of any kind. In fact, 66.7% of workers in Ontario currently do not have a workplace pension plan. There are also Ontarians who do have a workplace pension that is not sufficiently keeping them from struggling in retirement. Seniors and retirees are a highly vulnerable group. Many of us, specifically my New Democrat colleagues, have always been very concerned about what will happen when people retire or no longer are able to work.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, you know me: I'm not one to complain. But there's 10 sidebars going on, especially on this side, and I can't hear even a word the member is saying. If you'd like to have a group talk, take it outside, please.

Continue.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker.

That is why my party, the NDP, first introduced a made-in-Ontario pension plan back in 2010. Back then, the Liberal government of the day opposed it, but I'm glad to see that they have since come to see the error of their ways.

That being said, we do have grave concerns that the Liberal government will continue their practice of offering half measures instead of meaningful and real change. We challenge this government to stand up for all Ontarians by not caving in to the insurance industry and other corporate interests. Do not allow the ORPP to become a watered-down version of what is meant to be a secure and adequate retirement income for all Ontarians.

Let's take a closer look at what is being proposed here. I think we can all agree that the devil is in the

details. As I understand it, Bill 56 provides the following directives:

"1. (1) The government of Ontario shall, no later than January 1, 2017 and in accordance with the parameters set out in this act, establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan."

It also lays out that at a later date "the Minister of Finance or another member of the executive council shall introduce legislation that ...

"(b) provides for the administration and investment management of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan through the administrative entity described in section 2; and

"(c) provides for the requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, including the basic requirements...."

Essentially, this bill says that another two bills are on the way. One bill will administer the plan and handle asset management responsibilities, and another will deal with the plan design, with all components of the plan mandated to be up and running by January 1, 2017.

I know that I'm not alone when I express a serious lack of confidence in this government's ability to establish an arm's-length administrative body. We need only look as far as the Ornge, gas plant and eHealth scandals to be justified in our skepticism.

Frankly, we can ill afford to allow them to get this one wrong. There are too many people in need of help and too much at stake. Too many people are counting on us to get this done right the first time.

With that in mind, let's return to the bare details that we have been presented with by looking at the schedule of the basic requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Here is what we know:

First, eligible employers and eligible employees shall contribute to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. This gives us an idea of the obligation of eligible employers to deduct contributions and the remittance to a yet-to-be-established administrative entity.

We find out that the maximum threshold for 2017 will be \$90,000 and that the combined employer/employee contribution rate shall not exceed 3.8%.

It further goes on to note that some employees will be eligible and others will be exempt. Those with a comparable plan will be exempt. Retirement benefits shall be paid for the life of a plan member, beginning at age 65.

At this point, it is unclear what is meant by "comparable." Is a defined contribution plan considered comparable? Long-standing defined benefit pension plans like the OPTrust, OMERS, HOOPP and CAAT Pension Plan, as well as the government-managed Canada Pension Plan, provide significant benefits to our economy yet have received no mention here.

1620

I did want to note that unlike the CPP, which allows pension contributions on earnings up to only \$52,000 a year, the ORPP, as proposed, would allow contributions on income up to \$90,000 a year. This is a welcome

inclusion that could allow many middle-class Ontarians to save much more than they currently can under the CPP ceiling, meaning their retirement incomes could be substantially higher as a result.

While there are a few more details included, I find that there are certainly more questions than answers raised with this bill. Clearly, there are far more details of the ORPP to be worked out. The government has stated their intention to work them out through consultations, yet for many, the consultation process has been lacking. My office has already begun to receive calls and emails from constituents expressing their concerns about what this bill will mean for them, and quite frankly, I wish I had more information to offer them in return.

I am certain that the insurance and banking industries have been well afforded the opportunity to have their position heard at the highest levels of this government. However, I am focused on the many voices that were not offered a seat at the table during the consultations. It is our duty to speak for those who could not.

According to the 2013 report *Defined Benefit Pension Plans: Strengthening the Canadian Economy*, pensions sustain retirees, lift seniors out of poverty and contribute to the economy of communities.

"Pensions are critical to the economy of smaller towns and rural communities"—that's something the Conservatives may be interested in—"where they represent a large percentage of local income ... in Elliot Lake, for example, income from pensions (pensions, GIS, old age and CPP) represents approximately 35% of the local economy. The business generated from the resulting retiree spending represents many thousands of Ontario jobs."

While there may be several factors contributing to the lack of retirement savings in Ontario, we do know that the kind of pension we are proposing here could be a key economic factor to our small and rural communities.

We must look at the long term and the need to ensure a dignified old age over many decades to come. We cannot give in to pressures of corporate need over those of our own seniors and retirees.

Simply stated, New Democrats are seeking to help ensure that our seniors live with the dignity they deserve, and we are worried that this government will cave in to insurance interests and exempt employers. We are obviously in favour of a made-in-Ontario pension plan, and we look forward to seeing the details from the government on exactly how they plan on moving this item forward, and to making amendments to this bill in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We don't normally do that, but since it's family, go ahead.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to introduce two very special people who are visiting us today: my sister Kiran

and my sister-in-law Anita Dhillon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thanks to the member from London—Fanshawe for her introductory remarks.

As you well know, the Associate Minister of Finance, Minister Hunter, has been working diligently over the last number of months in doing the consultations that are required for this particular piece of legislation.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act is a very important piece of legislation for the future generations of Ontario. I can tell you that my daughter, Chloe, at 28 years old, and my son, Calvin, at 22 years old—I don't think putting money away for their retirement is at the forefront of their thoughts at this point.

I think it's important for us as a government, as we continue to move forward and build a stronger economy, to work together with our younger generation to ensure that in the future, the impact not only on Ontario's economy, but the national economy, is not negatively affected with the amount of seniors there are going to be in 20 years' time.

I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you're well aware that the number of seniors—including myself; I will be one of them—is going to double over the next 20 years, and we need to prepare for that. This is a responsible piece of legislation.

This pension plan will also alleviate some of the pressures that governments of the future are going to feel as a result of the aging population. I can tell you, Speaker, that there are going to be a lot of different kinds of needs in the future, whether it's health care or support for senior citizens in retirement homes or long-term-care facilities.

I think that if we can continue to move this piece of legislation forward, continue the debate, let's see if we can get it into committee as quickly as possible so we can hear from some more stakeholders and pass this important piece of legislation so we can implement it by 2017.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to share some of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce information, first on the ORPP, and most recently their Business Confidence Index, because they're so correlated. I'm reading from their document here: "The chamber and our members have been worried about the potential negative impacts of the ORPP on the business climate ... we're convinced that the ORPP should not go ahead. We ... want to see the Ontario government come out with an economic impact analysis of how the ORPP will affect Ontario's economy."

Let me tell you a little bit about what their members are feeling. This is from the brand new document called *Emerging Stronger, 2015*. But the name belies the facts. We're not emerging stronger, if you look at the following:

"In a global context, do you believe the Ontario economy is going in the right or wrong direction?" Last year, 42% of businesses felt we were going in the right direction; this year it plummeted to 29%. That's a startling number.

"How confident are you in your own organization's economic outlook right now?" It plummeted from 74% down to 58%.

"How confident are you in the Ontario economy right now?" It plummeted from 48% to 29%.

The next aspect of it: If you go at all areas of the business climate, whether it's auto manufacturing; down from 71 to 59; if you look at financial services, down from 89% to 71%.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to respond to the thoughtful comments of my colleague from London—Fanshawe on Bill 56, which is, as we know, the first of three bills that are going to come forward where we'll have the opportunity to debate the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I'm glad that we'll be having so much opportunity in this Legislature to discuss pensions because, as we know, it's a mountain of a topic. It's a hugely important topic to every part of our communities and economic ecosystems.

I'd like to refer to some of the points made by my colleague. It was an interesting point, and I'm glad she brought up the realities and some statistics of women living in poverty. I'm reminded of the conversation we had not too long ago surrounding child care, and discussing that many women are also kept in the home and out of the workforce by the fact that this province hasn't yet shown that they truly prioritize affordable child care, which is one more piece of the economic realities facing many of our families.

We have to have the conversation about the realities facing our families, facing workers. Many people who are struggling in this economic reality could teach the rest of us how to stretch money and how to get by. But we don't want people to just get by; we want them to be able to survive and thrive and live with dignity.

I think it's important for us to ask ourselves what it is that we want for our neighbours, what is it that we want for our downtowns. We want them to survive and thrive long beyond the immediate.

We need people to be able to have enough money that they can spend freely and live freely and walk through the doors of our businesses, go out for lunch with a friend. We don't want our seniors and our retirees to live in fear of the next economic surprise.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very, very important bit of legislation.

Ontario is taking a very important step in helping millions of people save for their retirement by introduc-

ing our Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015. The people in my riding of Durham are concerned about their retirement. We have heard from the minister that in her conversations with people across the province of Ontario, people are telling her they're concerned about outliving their savings.

We know that many Ontarians aren't saving enough to maintain their standard of living in retirement. Study after study highlights this. In the past few weeks, three studies have been released, by RBC, Sun Life Financial and CIBC, showing growing numbers of Ontarians have not been saving sufficiently and fear they will outlive their savings.

According to a poll released by RBC, only 39% of respondents put money away for retirement in 2014, and 30% of respondents have not even begun to save at all. Another study released by Sun Life Financial shows that growing numbers of Canadians believe they won't be financially prepared to retire at 65.

The reasons for this undersaving are many. Workplace pension coverage is low and getting lower. Two thirds of Ontarians don't have a workplace pension plan. We also know that voluntary savings vehicles are not enough. In 2012, there was \$280 billion in unused RRSP room in Ontario. At the same time, CPP is not enough to live on. In 2012, the average benefit paid by CPP was \$6,800.

Together—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from London—Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to read this little excerpt from a letter I got from a constituent on this particular topic about her individual situation. She refers to the pension asset transfer under section 80.1 of the Pension Benefits Act. She's pointing out that:

"More than 15 years have passed since the government's commitments were made. In the interim, A Fine Balance, the report of the Expert Commission on Pensions, was presented to the Minister of Finance on October 31, 2008. That report confirmed that I and others had been financially disadvantaged as a result of past government divestments or transfer of employees from one agency or level of government to another, or to the private sector.

"The commission specifically stated that 'These individuals will receive pension benefits that are lower than they would have been if all of their service credits and associated pension assets had been transferred to their new plan.' The commission also suggested immediate action and made recommendations to the government. Following that report, the government made a further commitment to address this issue and received all-party support in the Legislature."

This is what she also said, and I'm reading excerpts:

"Essentially, I am being asked to fund the credited service shortfall caused by the government's failure to honour its commitments to the employees." This is another part of her letter: "The government of Ontario should revisit this issue and amend the process to provide the necessary funding to pay for members' credited

service shortfalls. We should be able to place trust in the words of our government as they were conveyed to us at the time of the divestment and transfer.”

So when we're talking about pensions, we need to have two conversations: the one that we're talking about, a new pension plan, and the existing pension plans for people who are facing these kinds of situations. That's what this government needs to do correctly. It's not just about the new; it's about what's happening with people's pension plans and what happened to this person way back 15 years ago. She's still suffering those outcomes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I should tell you that I will be sharing my time with the members from Halton and Ottawa South.

I'm pleased to speak on Bill 56, the Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Also, the Premier, for her tenacity in going down this road; our finance minister, Charles Sousa; and the Honourable Mitzi Hunter, the associate minister. This is really short-term pain for long-term gain. The real benefactors, of course, are our seniors—including me—and our aging population.

Most people believe that we here have a pension, and a lucrative one at that. Do the feds have one in Ottawa? Yes, they do. Do the provincials have one here at Queen's Park in Toronto? No, they don't. Most people don't really know that, so I thought we'd make them aware of that.

I have to tell you that six years ago I was working on both a private member's bill and a motion to commence the Ontario pension plan becoming part of and an extension to the Canada Pension Plan. We did not realize at that time that Ottawa would not work with us. I had the good fortune to meet with accountants, professionals in the financial community, specialists and actuaries, who are the heart and soul of this process. To a person, to a group, we were advised, “The sooner you start, the better.” It was approved at the first level unanimously, but never proceeded past that, losing its standing on the order paper.

I could also tell you that this plan takes equal contributions from employers and employees, capped at 1.9% on each employee on annual earnings up to \$90,000. If you're earning \$800 a week or \$40,000 a year, a 1.9% cost to the employee is \$760 annually or \$15 a week. The employer will pay the other \$15 for you, and that is an added bonus.

I have a 55-year-old business in Ajax which my family runs. Everybody from the high end is saying that the ORPP is a job-killing payroll tax. Let me tell you: For me, as an employer, I have to pay the same 1.9% for each employee. It is expensive for me, but it is the right thing to do.

One final story—I'm trying to read that clock. Is that 7:05 left, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's 7:02.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm the oldest of 10 children of Mary and Lou Dickson. Both have passed away, in their eighties and nineties respectively, in the last 10 years. I had bought my parents a home in Florida, so that in their last 15 good years they had a place to reside in the winter.

I get a call one morning at 4 a.m. from a hotel in Georgia. My mother wanted to go home. They were staying at the motel. She wouldn't go to the hospital. She wouldn't go in the ambulance. I spoke to the manager and said, “Get an ambulance. Advise the hospital that she's coming. Arrange a doctor. Call me within one hour,” and two things happened out of that. One is health, and how blessed we are to have health care here. For a 30-hour stay, the bill was \$9,500. When it comes to pension savings, the only pension savings they had, of course, were their 10 children, who certainly took care of it.

I will share my time with my colleagues, Mr. Speaker. I would go to the member from Halton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I've heard from many young new families in my riding of Halton concerned about the Ontario pension plan. They are living their lives just in time—buying their first homes just in time, raising their children just in time and getting to work just in time—and they are worried that they need to start planning for their futures now. It can't happen just in time.

Our government has a responsibility to the people of this province to ensure that they can enjoy a secure, predictable and comfortable retirement. With our made-in-Ontario ORPP, the government is looking to provide a cost-effective, responsible strategy to help Ontario workers build a more stable retirement future. The program would be the first of its kind in Canada and would initially provide coverage to more than three million working Ontarians currently relying on the CPP, Old Age Security and their own savings.

1640

The decision to move forward with this made-in-Ontario plan has been driven mainly by necessity. As this government has previously stated, enhancing the federally controlled CPP would be the preferred method for ensuring retirement security. But the CPP as it is just simply isn't enough. And unfortunately, despite a strong consensus among provinces and territories, the federal government has shown a complete unwillingness to engage in discussions and find ways to make improvements to the current system—a decision that flies in the face of their own economic analysis, which shows that a CPP enhancement would benefit the economy in the long run.

Constituents in my riding of Halton are concerned, Mr. Speaker. They're concerned that they have not saved enough or that they may outlive their savings. They're concerned that they don't have an adequate workplace pension plan and they are concerned that they may never be able to retire. This situation is completely unacceptable.

able, and I'm sure my colleagues here in the Legislature would agree that no Ontario worker, after a lifetime of working and contributing to the economy, should have to live the rest of their lives fearful for their own comfort and security.

Ontario workers expect their government to take a leadership role in helping to secure their retirement. That's why it's critical that this government take responsible steps to make the necessary changes. By rolling out the ORPP over the next few years, this government will not only be adding a valuable enhancement to the CPP but we will be making sure that we are fulfilling our responsibility to the workers of this province. After a lifetime of hard work, they deserve nothing less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very pleased to speak to this bill.

I had the pleasure this afternoon of recognizing the newest addition to our family, Vaughan, who is eight weeks old. I'll tell you about the first time I held Vaughan. The first time I held Vaughan, I looked at him—he's beautiful—but I said—

Interjection: He doesn't look like you.

Mr. John Fraser: He doesn't look like me. "My daughter is 35," I said. "Where is he going to be when he's 35? Where am I going to be when he's 35?"

The reason I tell you that story is, it was a very edifying thing to lock into the mind that our responsibility as legislators is to look 10, 15, 20 or 30 years down the road.

We have a pension crisis. That's not something new; that's something that the federal government has identified. They have clearly said that we have a crisis in savings.

Mr. Norm Miller: We don't have a crisis.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, we do.

The most reasonable and thoughtful and prudent thing to do would be for the federal government to do what all the provinces—including Ontario and indeed the finance minister at the time—were in favour of, which is to enhance the CPP. It's very clearly known that that was the case.

There's an abdication of leadership. The federal government, at its highest levels, has said, "No, we're not going to do that," because they don't believe that that's the right thing to do, apart from the fact that all 10 provinces agree, and some factions inside that government. I think that's a real abdication of leadership. In that leadership vacuum, as legislators, we have a responsibility to look after people's futures, to do what we can to make sure that people have what they need in the future, whether it's health care, whether it's education, or whether it's savings and support for their retirement.

Now, 40 or 50 years ago, when the CPP came in, I remember my mom telling me, "We weren't happy. We really weren't happy when that happened." She was a federal nurse. But do you know what? My mom gets CPP right now, and she said to me, "I'm very glad that we did

that. I'm very glad that as a society we decided to do that."

I'm going to go back to the CPP and say that I really do believe that the failure to enhance the CPP, the unwillingness of the federal government to do that, is an abdication of responsibility. I would have thought that from the other side of the House, we may have heard a bit about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate—sorry; questions and answers.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Congratulations to the member from Ottawa South on your latest addition to your family. It was really nice to see them here. Of course, I know that the first thing you said to him was, "Welcome to the world. You owe \$23,000." I know that really would have been the first thing that came up.

A financial survey of 12,000 households was conducted quite recently by the world-renowned McKinsey and Co. They told us that 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their standard of living after they stop working. McKinsey and Co. told us that, "The vast majority of Canadians are saving enough for retirement, to ensure a standard of living similar to their pre-retirement lifestyle, according to a new, large-scale survey of household finances."

Speaker, like everyone in this House, I too would hope and pray that everybody retires with dignity. There's no hesitation to say that. But "McKinsey principal Fabrice Morin said the findings suggest many people are worrying needlessly"—and that's part of what's happening here. "Mr. Morin said that if even 30% of the value of people's homes had been included as a financial asset, the proportion of Canadians with adequate savings for retirement would climb to 87%."

If the issue is, as McKinsey and Co. have stated, that 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their standard of living, then let's have a program that funds and assists the other 17%. Let's have a program that's focused on the 17% as opposed to imposing a burden on the entire economy of Ontario. If this group needs help, then let's help. Let's not use a sledgehammer to squash an ant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the members from Ajax-Pickering, Halton—happy birthday, by the way—and Ottawa South.

It's really interesting because we see this issue through a fairly different lens. That's what's also so interesting about debate in this place, but I'd like to just touch on a couple of the comments that the member from Ajax-Pickering mentioned.

He said that this would be "short-term pain for long-term gain." I will agree with you about the pain part because youth unemployment in this province is the highest in Canada. Youth in this province are paying the highest tuition rates in Canada. Our workplace safety rates are some of the worst in the country. There's a lot of work to do, and it does come down to priorities.

The member points out that, of course, it's the right thing to do, which sounds like a very Liberal thing to say

these days because there are a lot of things that the Liberal government should be doing, especially with regard to the Sudbury by-election and that investigation. There's a lot of things to do about how you save emails and don't delete emails. There's an accountability and transparency issue in this place with this government, and the right thing to do would be to actually remove Greg Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed while that investigation is going on—

Interjections.

Interjection: Pat Sorbara.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Pat Sorbara, yes. I correct my record.

It's really interesting to hear members say, "We have to make sure that we're going to take care of people." When we go through this budget, as the finance critic for the NDP, I'm telling you this budget is going to be a painful budget for the people of this province. It will be even more austere than last year's budget. So you can plan for an Ontario Registered Pension Plan but, right now, there is work to be done in this province to ensure that people can live their lives today with dignity and plan for the future with integrity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's quite a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to talk about this new pension plan for Ontario. We know that the reasons for this pension plan are many. Workplace pension coverage is getting lower, and two thirds of Ontarians don't have a pension plan. We know that voluntary savings vehicles are not enough.

In 2012, there was \$280 billion in unused RRSP room in Ontario. At the same time, CPP is not enough to live on. The average benefit paid by CPP was \$6,800.

Now, in my past life working in a federal constituency office, I have to say that I've seen quite a number of seniors coming into the office, and sometimes they've lost a spouse, which has a massive effect on their income. It's devastating to see people who cannot manage to live on the money they have coming in.

1650

I was in the private sector. I had a business, and I can tell you that I would have been absolutely delighted to have this assistance from the government to provide a pension plan for my employees. I had a business in the 1980s, and during that time, I was paying my staff \$15 an hour. That vehicle would have been very much appreciated. I don't buy it that this pension plan is going to put businesses out of business. That's simply not true. A 1.9% contribution for employers is not going to put businesses out of business. I'm not buying it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's with great interest that I hear some of the comments. I think the member from Kitchener–Waterloo is very right: There are priorities. One of the priorities is getting the people of Ontario back to work. Many groups are saying that if we go ahead with

this, we can expect another 160,000 man-years of unemployment caused by this plan.

I see the students in the gallery here. It bothers me every time I hear about this one-third tuition benefit. Who gets it? Almost nobody. They brag about it, they advertise it, but you don't qualify for it. Less than 10% of the students at Queen's University and Western are actually able to qualify for it. But they brag about it.

We're looking at studies that show we're the third-best country in the world for our seniors living in retirement. This is nothing more than a candy dish for this government because they're running out of money. They're talking about a carbon tax, because they need more money. They're talking about a pension tax, because they need more money. A good percentage of people are not going to contribute to this plan but are going to benefit from it. Who is paying their fee but the people who are paying into it?

There are a lot of things not happening. It was interesting to hear the note how there's no assistance from the government other than demanding that the business contributes the 1.9% and most people contribute the 1.9% on their wages. That's money lost that they could spend on their home or a car—pay them off. The interest they would save by having that money available probably outweighs what they're going to get in the pension plan.

I hear them talking again about seniors looking for it. Seniors will not gain a penny from this. Anybody who is not working or is now retired does not get anything. They don't contribute to it; they don't get anything from it. So let's clear up the confusion. I know it's a great vote-getter, but it's dangerous, and that's what these organizations are telling you. We now have the highest payroll taxes on the continent. Businesses are leaving. That's why unemployment is high.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South has two minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the members from Nipissing, Kitchener–Waterloo, Kingston and the Islands, and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I want to address the comments from the member from Nipissing and just make sure, on the record, to say that the first thing I thought when I saw Vaughan was, "You are so adorable and loveable. I want to be alive when you're 35." I wanted to make sure that that was on the record.

To the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I appreciate her comments very much. I thought she might direct her comments a bit more toward the member from Nipissing because of how far he went, in some ways, with the McKinsey report and the fact that there is a pension crisis here. But I do appreciate her comments in terms of, yes, it is a budget and we do have to make some very tough decisions. We have limited resources. We have to allocate them in the best way possible. There are all sorts of things we'd like to do for people. We can't do them all.

I agree with the member for Kingston and the Islands: Two thirds of people don't have a pension plan. That's a

serious thing. It's not just the fact that they'll need an income and a standard of living. That has an impact on our economy in the future.

Back to the member from Nipissing, in terms of the value of a house: That's if you liquidate your house, and that's assuming that the value in the house is constantly maintained. I mean, people need housing to live.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You mean you've got to leave your house to get the money out of it? Oh my God.

Mr. John Fraser: It's something like that.

To the member from Stormont-Glengarry—I'll get it right—on first-year tuition: There is an income threshold in that. The plan is being utilized. It's a good plan. It is making tuition affordable for people. What we're trying to do with the pension, too, is to make sure that people can afford to live in a reasonable way when they retire and feel secure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to rise and join the debate today and speak on Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015. As my colleagues have shared from this side of the House, as a party, we stand united in saying we are strongly opposing this act.

Ontarians should be trusted to save for their own retirement. I can definitely say that the Liberal government can't be trusted to save on their behalf. I share that because there's so many examples. This Liberal government can't be trusted to get anything properly in place. We currently have four investigations going on. We've seen the deletion of emails, Ornge, eHealth—the list goes on and on. So the reality is—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You usually stand up and say "Point of order," and then you start talking. You don't talk before the point of order.

The member from Ottawa South has a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to have this point of order. The member has to speak to the bill that we're—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would remind the member that we would like to stay within the boundaries of what the discussion is. I think you were wandering a little bit, so if you could bring it back a little bit.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Absolutely, Speaker; I'd be pleased to.

The fact of the matter is, because of all the scandals the Liberals have subjected Ontarians to, they can't be trusted to get a retirement pension plan right. Once and for all, you have to call a spade a spade. You have done a horrible job in managing—wasteful spending, time and time again. You have made this province cash-strapped. As a result, you're looking for any revenue stream to bail yourself out. It's absolutely disgusting.

This Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is nothing but a payroll tax. Businesses will have to find an additional 1.9% of revenue to support the contributions they're going to be made to give into this Ontario Retirement

Pension Plan. It will hurt people who live paycheque to paycheque. That's the reality in Ontario right now.

Earlier today, we had families in here advocating for this government to finally do something right and to allow them to provide for their families that are suffering from aHUS, a debilitating disease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We're wandering again.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My point is, families in Ontario have so many other worries that require financial attention. They cannot afford to have a spendthrift Liberal government gouging their pockets, because they have family priorities they have to take care of.

Further and above that, another example of how there is very little left over in Ontarian taxpayers' pockets: Last week in my riding, a community had to have a fundraiser for the Bruce Grey United Way. The United Way in our area is running out of money because they're helping so many people keep the heat on. The fact of the matter is, if people can't even afford to keep the heat on, how on earth are they going to afford payment towards an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that isn't necessary in this province?

It's policies like this one that hold Ontario back and literally drive jobs away. It will force employers to compensate for higher costs with fewer employees—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Barrie.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Just in case the member didn't hear it properly, what's going to happen is, when the Liberal government subjects Ontario businesses to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, they're probably going to lay off people because they don't have the income, they don't have the bottom line to support this type of payroll tax.

This is not what Ontario businesses want. Let's think about Target. Most recently, Target left Canada, and we lost 17,000 jobs overall. In January, specifically, Target cited that the ORPP was one of the reasons that they could not invest in the future in Ontario. In my riding of Huron-Bruce, small business is big business, and it accounts for thousands of jobs and revenue in our communities. Hurting the job creators is the last thing this province needs.

1700

The pension plan worry is shared by so many. For instance, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business notes that 97% of small businesses are concerned about the current state of Ontario's economy, and more than half say that they'll reduce employees if the pension plan goes ahead. When are they going to accept what they're doing to jobs in Ontario? That is the question here. They're driving jobs away because they've had wasteful spending through the last decade, they've had so many scandals, and they need to find new revenue sources to help them pave the way so that they can try to spin a budget that makes sense.

Collectively, we need to be doing everything that we can to make it easier for small businesses to thrive and create jobs here in Ontario. We could talk about energy, but I'll get to that in a moment.

Ontario is becoming less and less competitive. Earlier today I met with the petroleum industry, and they talked about the unintended consequences of the bad policies that are coming out of this particular government. At the end of it all, there is going to be less in the bottom line to employ people in Ontario, and it's a real concern. We're exporting our businesses to the States and to other provinces due to already high payroll costs, high electricity rates and proposed government initiatives such as carbon pricing and the ORPP.

You know, facts speak for themselves. This Liberal government claims that people are not saving enough for their retirement, and that we have a huge economic crisis on our hands. Well, Speaker, again, the only crisis we have is a government that is proving themselves to be untrustworthy based on their by-election initiative in Sudbury, and they're proving themselves untrustworthy because of their many scandals. We have to call this government to account when, in fact, they're trying to create a crisis here, but we know—and we just heard it from the member from Nipissing—that Ontarians are saving enough. From 1999 to 2008, Ontario had the highest savings rate of all provinces in Canada, and currently Ontario sits at the national average.

People who are struggling in pension years are often single, elderly individuals who may have never worked, and only receive 60% of their spouse's CPP. These are the vulnerable people in our society who need help. However, this scheme that the Liberals have proposed will do nothing to help this group.

In fact, back in January, I learned of a family in my riding, and it's a sad state of affairs. Their mother is a single, elderly individual who cannot afford to pay her bills, and as a result, the siblings, on a monthly rotation, are paying her utilities so that she can stay in the family home. That is not the dream that she had for her children. This government needs to stand up and take responsibility for their wastefulness and for their failed schemes like the Green Energy Act, cut out the subsidies that people can't afford, and once and for all, do something that really is respectful of Ontarians.

The reason people are in difficult situations and finding it hard to save is, as I said, solely because of this Liberal government's actions. Hydro rates are skyrocketing, people are finding it hard to make ends meet, and at the end of the month, as I said before, there isn't very much to save for the future, sadly enough. How on earth could they afford further deductions through this imposed savings program?

If this government had a more accurate and transparent energy policy, people would have the extra income to put away adequate money for retirement.

Liberals claim that currently the CPP isn't enough for Ontarians to retire on. That's because—just a reminder—CPP was never intended to be a retirement income, but rather a supplement.

Honestly, people cannot afford an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. This government needs to go back to the drawing board and do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to stand up and congratulate the MPP from Ottawa South, because he talked about his grandchild. Well, do you know what? Let's take a look at the young people who are up at the top here—they're up here paying attention to us—because at the end of the day, this is what it's about. It's about those kids who are here today, those young students. It's about our kids, our grandkids. That's what it's all about. We have to find a way to make sure that when they grow old, when they become seniors, they're not going to have to live in the province of Ontario in poverty, or not be able to pay for their health care. These are things we have to do.

How can we do it? I'll tell you how we do it. We should have done it under CPP. I went to Ottawa a number of times and I talked to MPs from all parties. Almost every party, until the last six months, agreed to enhance the CPP, including Conservatives, including Liberals, including the NDP, because they knew it was the right thing to do. They have a program in place that is already funded. It has enough money in it today to last 75 years. So if we enhance CPP, guess what's going to happen? We're going to be able to take care of our kids and our grandkids who are here watching us today, relying on us to make sure that they have a future when they become retirees.

Take a look at what's going on in our province today. It's our fault, quite frankly, that we have people dying on our streets because it's cold and they don't have affordable housing. What are we doing when we have health care to take care of our seniors and they can't afford it—or hydro bills? We have an opportunity, over the course of the next few days, through this debate, to make sure that doesn't happen to any senior in the province of Ontario ever again and to make sure our kids have a future that they can be proud of, not only for themselves but for their kids and their grandkids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to comment on the member from Huron—Bruce. I just don't think she gets it. We are trying to help people who are having a difficult time after working very hard for a lifetime, trying to do their savings—but it is very difficult for them once they retire because their pensions are so meagre. The request has been, why don't we enrich the pension to make it reasonable for people to live in dignity in their last years? This is what this argument is about.

I couldn't agree more with the member from Niagara Falls. We have the wealth in this country. The federal government is just about to declare a balanced budget, a surplus, tax cuts. They have the money to help people—we're talking about people.

I'll tell you, there's one person, Edda, in my riding, who worked her whole life for small companies as an

accountant. She has a little house. Now, at 72 years of age, she works as a crossing guard to make ends meet, because the pension she has is not enough. Do you know what she did? She came to me the other day, in private, and said, "Mike, I'm embarrassed. Can I go to the food bank so I can have enough food for me and my disabled son to get through?" That's disgraceful after all the years that she has worked.

The member from Huron–Bruce says, "You don't need the money. It's everybody else's fault. We can't do it." We must do it. We have the ability. We have the will. Stop making excuses why, in this rich country, we can't help people like Edda, who worked their whole lives and are working a job in this cold weather at 72—and we say to her, "We can't help you." That's wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to her comments. I thought they were excellent.

I want to welcome again the model Parliament students here today. I want to give you a little lesson here; I want to show you: From here over are the Progressive Conservatives; those are the new NDP members, and we can clearly tell that, and that's actually the government over there, the opposition—I guess some day they will be back in opposition.

1710

I just heard the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's comments. I can't understand—they've been in power for 12 years. Why didn't you actually start this Ontario pension plan 12 years ago? Back then, you had that wonderful Liberal government in Ottawa. They would have helped you with it. You did nothing for them. Now you're blaming Stephen Harper. You're blaming Stephen Harper for your mistakes—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Simcoe North.

All right. Here's how it's going to work, folks: The yelling stops. I'll give one warning and the next time, *hasta la vista*. So cut out the yelling across. You go through me.

Continue.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm saying is, if it was so wonderful in the last election, why didn't they do it 10 years or 12 years ago? Because back then, they didn't have Stephen Harper to blame. They could have blamed Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien. Why didn't they do it then? That's what I'm amazed at. Instead, they wait now till there's a federal government in Ottawa run by the Conservatives and they try to finger-point everything at them.

You know right well this thing is a disaster. Anybody who's ever run a business knows it's a disaster. It reminds me so much of the Green Energy Act, which was another disaster. You all know it. You've driven hydro prices so high no one can afford them, and that's why manufacturers are leaving this province day after day. You know it. They're leaving this province because of

the Green Energy Act and your incompetence as a government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, it's my privilege to stand in this fine Legislature and address the comments from the member from Huron–Bruce.

I'm pleased to welcome the students from the model Parliament here. I had the opportunity to connect with them earlier, and that was great. Many of them actually asked me what it was that pushed me into politics, and this is it: fighting for fairness and fighting for equity and opportunity.

To that end, I'd like to address some of the points made by the member: that Ontarians should be trusted to save for themselves. I'd like to challenge the premise of that. I don't think this is a question of trust. This is a question of opportunity. As we've heard ad nauseam from everybody in this room, people are struggling. Whether we're talking about youth who are unemployed or underemployed, whether we're talking about students, whether we're talking about workers, whether we're talking about future workers, everyone is doing their damndest to make ends meet and try to get ahead or just try to get by.

Many of the arguments that we hear from the Conservative side here—the Armageddon argument—that businesses are going to pull charity support, send business overseas and job loss. We're not arguing that there will be an economic impact on those businesses, and to say that's not what Ontario businesses want, okay, a fair point. But what is it that they want? Do they want customers or do they want window-shoppers? Do they want people who don't have enough money to spend in those businesses now or in the future? Do they want to close up in 10 years when nobody is able to contribute to the economy?

It's interesting too about the McKinsey report—a survey of households. How wonderful it would be for Ontarians to be able to plan to afford a house. Many of our Ontarians are struggling to pay rent, transit, dental and child care and all of the things that we talk about for them to even be able to afford a household in order to be surveyed, in order to be asked their opinions. I don't think that's worrying needlessly, as the conclusion was.

For seniors who won't benefit, seniors understand the benefit and they want that for our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Huron–Bruce has two minutes, and let's keep it civil.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay. Thanks very much, Speaker.

It's interesting—I appreciate the comments from the member for Niagara. He gave a nod to everyone participating in the model Parliament, but you need to know, based on the deficit and the debt that this Liberal government has created, that you're carrying \$23,000 of debt on your shoulders today, and if we can't get this government in line, that deficit is going to impact the debt on your shoulders and our shoulders even more greatly.

To the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: You know what? With all due respect, Speaker, he doesn't get it. Ontarians can't afford any more tax to cover up and pay for the wasteful spending of this government.

To the member for Simcoe North: Thanks for the history lesson and the political lesson. I really appreciated it. You mentioned finger-pointing. It's interesting, Speaker, that the Liberals are doing their finger-pointing at everyone else but them, and the problem actually does rest with them.

To the member from Oshawa: I'm afraid that this ORPP is just another example of a Liberal government picking winners and losers, because not everyone is going to benefit from this pension plan. Unemployed individuals and seniors who already can't afford their utilities—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has got to that level. You're warned.

Continue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you. To close, Speaker, I just want to really emphasize that pension fund benefits belong to the people who contribute to that plan, not to the government who creates it.

The budget outlines that the ORPP funds will be used to fund the Liberals' \$29-billion plan for infrastructure over the next 10 years, just like their Liberal federal cousins, who said just this past January, "If elected, the federal Liberals plan to use CPP contributions to build infrastructure across the country." Again, Speaker, pension fund benefits belong to the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Some days, I must confess that the afternoon sessions feel a lot longer. I'm sure that that clock has stopped working.

This is a really, really important issue, and I do want to address some of the design issues that we have flagged on Bill 56. I also want to say that the reasons to move forward on this far outweigh the reasons to not move forward on it.

We do have some concerns, and our concerns are fairly well documented. Obviously the current CPP is lacking, and I agree with the member earlier from Ottawa South that the federal government, under the leadership of Mr. Harper, is not going to be addressing the modernization of the CPP. He's very clear on that. He's very clear on the fact that he doesn't want the long-form census—because you certainly wouldn't want to have the data to actually develop policy and legislation to meet the needs of the people in this country. So I think it's safe to say that we will not be seeing any leadership from Stephen Harper on CPP modernization. That's full stop.

Only 34% of workers have access to a workplace pension plan. This is a huge concern for us, absolutely. That's why in 2010 we brought forward a private member's bill on this issue. At the time, we did not receive support for it from the Liberals, but this Bill 56

has some elements of that legislation and so, of course, we're happy to see it because the end goal is to ensure that people do have some income security down the line, that there is some stability. We've seen what happens when we don't plan for that.

There is an undersaving gap right now, and there are a couple of different reasons for that, to be quite honest. There's more precarious work in the province of Ontario. There is more part-time work in the province of Ontario. There is more contract work in the province of Ontario. Those jobs rarely come with any sort of job security or, of course, any sort of pension plan whatsoever.

The timing of this plan would coincide with the reduction in EI premiums. We are committed, on this side of the House—in this corner of the House, if you will—to ensuring that whatever plan goes forward actually is very strong and actually will be successful. That's encompassing a lot of different voices, because we've been very clear about consulting with a number of traditional and non-traditional stakeholders and we are looking forward, of course, when this does get to committee, to making sure that something happens.

Just to cover a few issues: Obviously the bill is in three pieces of legislation right now. The government plans to implement an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan at a certain date. There's some question as to whether or not the legislation had to come forward in this manner. Certainly we don't need legislation to talk about pensions, but there are obviously some politics at play.

When I speak about politics, it's obvious—the Liberal government is telling a story to the rest of the province about this pension plan. They would like to be talking about anything other than Sudbury or gas plants or emails, so we totally understand—they even rolled out sex ed; that's how bad it is in the province of Ontario. That was the change-the-channel moment. Actually, thanks to the Conservatives, it worked very well for them—not for you guys and certainly not for the people of this province to get some substance, to get some answers from this government on a number of issues that are outstanding.

1720

I just keep going back to this moment during the general election when I knocked on a door and a lady came to the door and she said, "Well, you know, I really need a pension, and they're going to give me a pension." I said, "Well, have you worked ever in your life?" "Well, no, but they said they're going to give me a pension." I think we have to be honest that there's a lot of misinformation out there. A lot of people don't understand what this pension plan would look like for them, especially if they are seniors. We are talking about the future and planning for the future.

After this part of the bill, a second bill will be responsible for the administration and the management, while a third bill will detail the specific design features of the plan. So the government is being very methodical about rolling out this piece of legislation because, quite honestly, I think it's very clear that they're trying to

figure it out. Fortunately, we're here to try to help you in that endeavour.

Obviously, the ORPP will be mandatory for Ontarians without an existing company pension and is expected to be phased in by January 2017. It essentially ensures that employees and employers contribute 1.9% of their earnings toward it, up to a maximum income level of \$90,000. But immediately, Mr. Speaker, the bill doesn't yet stipulate what the minimum threshold is, and this is an outstanding question. It would be really good if someone on that side was listening. Has that been considered, and if so, what is the minimum annual income for eligibility? It does seem to me that those at the lowest level of income would be of greater need than those at the \$90,000 level, as they would not necessarily have the opportunity to invest in savings themselves, given their working years.

We also know that any contributions from the Canada Pension Plan would be paid on top of it. For those employees who earn less than the \$70,000 mark in annual income, the ORPP benefit will end up being less than the CPP benefit. It will only be comparable to the CPP benefit for those earning close to the \$90,000 income range. It would also be significantly less than those benefits provided by other pension plans, like OMERS or the teacher pension plans or HOOPP or OPT. So there are some outstanding questions about the design of the bill.

I want to raise this issue because this has come up just sort of on the surface. The member from Oshawa recently in her comments addressed the fact that there is some concern about what will happen with this pension fund. I'm going to read, actually, from the budget. Another concern that we have around the design of the ORPP is concerning a little section in the 2014 budget, and it reads like this: "By unlocking value from its assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit," and then they've tied those funds to the AFP process, which the Auditor General of this province has highlighted as being very concerning.

Actually, I just had a really good meeting with the Auditor General. I went through some of the numbers that she highlighted. There's a very organized pro-P3 movement that was, obviously, not very impressed with that Auditor General's report. In fact, the government has been fairly flippant about it.

But this idea that pension plan funds would be pooled and then redirected to another obvious need—I mean, this government is obviously desperate for revenue streams. We've seen that time and time again. Ed Clark has been charged with unlocking value, if you will.

So this is a red flag for us because, quite honestly, there is not a lot of trust on this side of the House when the Liberal government starts talking about unlocking value. We haven't seen any evidence that that can be successful, and one has to question, if the design of this

plan does not meet some of the outstanding questions that we've already outlined, where is this money going to go? How is it going to be managed? Quite honestly, the Auditor General said that \$8.2 billion was overspent on those infrastructure projects, those 74 infrastructure projects. In the analysis of the value for money and the risk, she said that there's no empirical evidence to it. So, really, when you look at the numbers for those 74 infrastructure projects, we spent, just on additional financing, at a high interest rate—credit card rates, borrowing money—\$6.5 billion.

That is an obvious place where this government, I would hope, would be looking to find savings, so that all the other issues that we've raised here around why an ORPP is necessary—around senior levels of poverty, around gaps in health care funding, around a lack of vision around child care and the gaps in quality child care. There's a lot of money going to those financial corporations and those banks and those lawyers and those consultants that should be directed to the needs that we see every day in our ridings.

When the finance minister highlights the fact that he sees the ORPP as pools of new capital, it's quite concerning for us. We hope to find some clarity as this bill moves forward. As I said, we're committed to making it stronger and listening to those diverse voices who want to weigh in on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to speak when you are officiating in the chair.

I would like to salute, to begin with, the member from the third party from Kitchener-Waterloo. I think her sensible and measured comments, plus support, plus ideas about how certain things can be improved and sort of streamlined, are well taken, and we look forward to meeting her in committee.

I would, Speaker, with your indulgence, like to speak about three different kinds of spans. One is lifespan, one is health span, and the third is the money span. Unfortunately, the demographics are telling us that these are not coincident. If you're born in 1900 in the country of Canada, your life expectancy as a male is approximately 53 to 55 years. If you're born today, your life expectancy hits about 80 years. So you're looking at a 25-year increase—yes, miracles of modern medicine, antibiotics, public health etc. The point is that we are now outliving our money and, by the way, potentially, as you've just cited, the health care system as well. That is a demographic, that is a wave, that is a tsunami that is not really subject to opinion—for example, whether it's evolution or not—that's a reality. That is happening.

By the way, you don't have to go too far out of the jurisdiction of Canada or Ontario: Why do you think Detroit filed for bankruptcy? It was their unfunded pension liabilities which were among the lead items that caused that bankruptcy—with due respect to the Fraser report and the RAND Corp. and the McKinsey report. This is reality, and we must deal with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the remarks of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Actually, her remarks reinforce my resolve to oppose this thing. The remarks by the member opposite there really reinforced my resolve to oppose this thing.

This is a cash grab; that's all it is. They have no interest, really, in the pension plan per se. It's called a tax grab. They're short of money. We are in debt up to our ears, and they can't understand this. They just want more and more money coming in.

They blame the federal government for not helping them out. Why would anybody want to do business with this government? They haven't got the resolve to spend things wisely. I will give you a list of examples: Ornge, eHealth, the gas plant scandals, Sudbury. Come on, guys. Speaker, this government doesn't know how to be responsible with the funds they have. They don't have that responsibility. It's not in their DNA, sir, respectfully.

When I listened to the remarks from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, she threw up a lot of red flags as to why we shouldn't trust this government with more of our constituents' money. We can't. We shouldn't. They don't know how to be responsible with it, and that's been proven too many times in the past 10 years or so. We're \$23,000 in debt per person in Ontario. I'm expecting another grandchild in June; that's 23,000 bucks on that poor little child's shoulders. We can't trust them.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and share my comments for the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and to build on some of the points that she touched on, but I'd like to start with what the member from Etobicoke North had talked about. He talked about three different spans—I believe it was lifespan, health span and money span. I'd like to talk about a different span, a career span.

In my city—not just in Windsor West, but in the neighbouring riding of Windsor–Tecumseh—we are very proud of the automotive industry, not only the plants that build the vehicles but those that feed parts to the vehicles. The people who work in these plants generally put in 20 or 30 years working in a plant toward a private-company-provided pension. We've often then seen these private companies suddenly close up shop, and these people are without pensions now. That's something that I think the government needs to be looking at, some sort of protection for the people in the private sector who work all their lives toward a private-sector pension and then find out near the end of their career that that pension is no longer available.

Certainly in my riding a big concern is the ability for people to retire with dignity and security. Had the federal government stepped up when they should have, then there could have been enhancements to the CPP and we wouldn't be having this discussion today, but un-

fortunately they dropped the ball, so this discussion is necessary. I know that people in my riding discuss affordability issues; that's certainly a concern, for them to be able to afford to eat, to keep the lights and the heat on, and to survive. In order to do that in their senior years, we need to have something in place in order for them to be able to save, to be able to afford some of the costs of living and to potentially put money back into our economy. That's a big concern.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. I didn't realize you were going to see me from the side, but you're very observant. You're doing a great job.

Let me just make some comments on the dialogue from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. It's not very often that both sides of the House agree on certain things. This is one of those things. There's a lot of passion, from the third party and us, to get this done. Let's get it over with. We've heard, even from the opposition, "Why didn't we do this 12 years ago? Why didn't we do it 15 years ago?" They're admitting, maybe, that we should have done it. It hasn't been done, so let's do it.

I would plead—I'm virtually going to plead—with the members of the House. We've debated this piece of legislation for over nine hours. Over 55 members spoke to this piece of legislation. I think that this legislation needs to go to committee so that we can do some fine-tuning and take on the concerns of the folks who have shown a lot of interest from both sides, so that we can come up with some final results.

I would say that this is not new. It was part of our budget—which, frankly, none of the opposition supported. It was part of our platform. When we as the government side and the NDP members, the third party, support it, let's get this done. I'm not trying to rush it, but I'm just saying that we've heard it over and over again. I'm calling on the opposition: Please let this debate collapse, so that it can go to committee and get all the good work that committees do—because that's where the nuts and bolts are finalized—and let's bring it back to this House and get it done with. I can't be any more straight than that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Kitchener–Waterloo, two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the members from Etobicoke North, Perth–Wellington, Windsor West and Northumberland–Quinte West for their feedback.

The member from Etobicoke North says that we're outliving our money. That's a long-standing issue, I think. I guess we should commend ourselves for being a healthier society, but there is a reason to plan.

The member from Perth–Wellington says that my comments convinced him to vote against it. I guess that's my job. From my perspective, from our perspective, there is legislation that is worth standing up for and working for to strengthen. There are some outstanding questions, as I mentioned, around the design of this piece of legisla-

tion, which need our attention and which we're committed to doing.

I did wonder how long it was going to take for a member to bring up the issue of evolution. That was just in time, I think.

Around the fiscal part of this piece of legislation, fortunately today it was just announced that the Financial Accountability Officer—the motion was passed, and he has been hired. This was something, as you know, that we fought for because we recognized that there needs to be another lens of fiscal responsibility, accountability and transparency in this House. We're looking forward to this independent officer of the Legislature getting work done and applying a new level of scrutiny to financial decisions in this House. I think that that has actually been a long time coming. I hope that, as an independent officer of this Legislature, the Financial Accountability Officer may garner a little bit more support and respect than the Auditor General, who brought forward a very thorough Auditor General's report just before Christmas which was dismissed by the Liberals. That's an improvement we fought for and are very proud of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to speak to Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Before I start on my remarks, I want to thank the member for Oshawa and NDP pension critic for her excellent lead speech and work on this file.

As everyone in this chamber is aware—and if you're not, I'll be sure to repeat it a few times during my time today—my community of Windsor West offers some of the highest-quality labour across the province, in a number of industries and across a number of sectors. We have a developing technology sector, a thriving tourist and service sector and, of course, a strong foundation in automotive and auto parts manufacturing.

Windsor has one of the most celebrated automotive sectors in North America, and the industry is woven into the fabric of our community. One of the cornerstones of the automotive sector and truly one of the many reasons this industry is so attractive to work in is the historic quality of the private-sector pensions offered to auto workers.

I think it's important to note that workers fought hard for these pensions and continue to fight hard to preserve their retirement security along with that of the next generation. We have some of the best union representation from the auto sector in the country, with Unifor Locals 444 and 200, to name just a couple. These locals have active retirees' associations that continue to contribute to our economy, and I'm always glad to see representatives from these organizations at events in Windsor.

When people feel safe and secure in their retirement, the whole community benefits. Pensions allow people the freedom to retire securely. This means more time spent

with friends and family and enjoying what you have worked your whole life to achieve. It also means the financial freedom to travel and spend time enjoying local attractions like golf courses, coffee shops, fitness centres, our wonderful waterfront and casino, and experiencing all that Windsor has to offer.

The whole economy benefits when retirees have a disposable income that can be injected back into our economy. This lifestyle is threatened. Young workers today do not have the same access to the pension plans their mothers and fathers did before them. All too often I receive calls from someone who has taken out a student loan to get an education only to graduate and be forced to work multiple jobs in an unrelated field to pay back their loans.

All too often, these workplaces do not have workplace pension programs. In fact, roughly two out of three Canadians do not currently have a workplace pension. Even among the one third that does, their pension plans may not be sufficient to carry them through retirement.

The retirement security crisis is not a trend that will manifest itself at some point in the distant future, but something we are experiencing right now across the province. As stated by our critic in her lead address to this chamber, the average monthly cost for seniors' housing in Ontario last year was over \$2,750. If we look at 2012 housing data for people over 65, seniors are coming up more than \$500 short every month. That's only taking housing into account.

1740

The bill before us today, Bill 56, seeks to address at least part of this problem by closing the gap between what people are saving for retirement and their projected expenses. The details of the bill have been discussed at length, but I think it's worth it to bring up a few key issues of this bill and what we know so far about the ORPP.

The bill states: "The government of Ontario shall, no later than January 1, 2017, and in accordance with the parameters set out in this act, establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan."

The bill goes on to state that another bill will be tabled and will outline who will administer and manage the plan, along with detailing a yet-to-be-established administrative entity.

What will the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan look like? So far, we know that the ORPP would make both the employer and employee contribute to the plan to a maximum of 3.8%. We also know that the maximum threshold will be \$90,000.

If this discussion around the ORPP is starting to sound a bit familiar, that's because it is. As the people of Ontario know, the NDP has long been a supporter of public pensions. As everyone in this chamber knows, we proposed an Ontario public pension plan back in early 2010, although there are some differences between our plan and the plan being discussed in 2015. This was done after extensive consultations across the province with hard-working Ontarians who wanted more stability in their retirement.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government of the day did not support this plan. They did not support the idea of an Ontario pension plan back then. Well, we all make mistakes, and I'm glad to see this government has finally come around and embraced the idea of a pension plan for Ontario. It's unfortunate that the government is only getting around to developing this plan now, when we could have started implementing an Ontario pension plan as far back as 2010. Better late than never, I suppose.

Windsor did have a chance to weigh in on the pension plan in February. One of the issues that came up was the failure of the federal government to increase existing Canada Pension Plan contributions. Rather than acknowledge this crisis, the federal government recommended a pooled retirement pension plan, or PRPP. These plans put big banks ahead of people, and that is something we don't support. So in the absence of the preferred option of expanding the CPP, the Ontario pension plan is the next best thing.

Chris Taylor, president of Windsor and District Labour Council, stated, "The federal government unfortunately refuses to act on that plan and that leaves little choice but for provinces to come up with bold plans to ensure the betterment of the people in their province."

As the member representing Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake mentioned while speaking to this bill yesterday, it's not that Ontarians don't know how to save; it's that the cost of living in this province is so high that people are struggling.

Every week, my office receives calls and emails about hydro bills that are out of control. My constituents email me copies of their hydro bills under the heading, "The middle class cannot afford this." One person stated, "Our hydro bills are costing us an arm and a leg. People are having trouble paying \$200 to \$300 a month and the cost of living is going up. I don't know ... soon people aren't going to be able to pay rent, food ... bills etc."

Well, Speaker, I listen and I tend to agree. This is why we are struggling to save in Ontario.

Along with the ORPP, we need to find ways to make life more affordable. We need to find ways to increase employment in southwestern Ontario, invest and diversify our economy.

Many people in this province are forced to move to find work, or circumstances see them change jobs throughout their lives. I held a number of jobs before the people of Windsor West elected me to be their representative. As a teen, I took my first job at a local café, then went on to be a dental assistant and, finally, a marriage officiant. Since a number of people in Ontario hold multiple jobs throughout their lives, the government needs to consider the issue of portability of the ORPP. As people move between workplaces, their pension needs to move with them. We need to account for a number of unique circumstances here, including how to accommodate workers that move in and out of the province.

We also need to consider how this plan will impact workers that have a comparable pension and then move to a workplace that does not. How will this plan affect

these workers? I hope the government consults with people experiencing these conditions as the government moves forward with the ORPP.

Speaker, I've enjoyed my time speaking to this bill and the future of the ORPP today. Pensioners know the value of pensions, and Ontarians know the value of pensions. Specifically, I want to thank all the pensioners who are standing up for the next generation of workers. They want our young people to be able to enjoy their retirement and have a similar standard and quality of life in their retirement as the generation that came before them. This is admirable, and it makes me proud to be from this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on Bill 56 and to support a lot of what the member from Windsor West is saying about the ORPP.

First of all, she mentioned portability. Yes, it is very important for a pension plan to be portable. I always say that these pensions were designed years ago when you started to work at 16 and you stayed with the same employer all your life, but it's not the case today.

Only one third of Ontarians have a pension plan, so it's important that we support this bill, and it seems like the NDP will be supporting the bill. We know that the Conservatives are not going to support the bill. So I would like all this discussion to collapse and move it to committee. If there is a need to improve the bill, that's the place where we could do it.

A lot of us have spoken on it, and it seems like we need to have this happen; otherwise the government will have to support all these retirees who will not have a pension. So I'll say today that we should all support this to go to committee for improvement, if there is a need to improve the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the speaker from Windsor West. I think she made some good points.

It's important to note that everybody—there are people who need help. I see them every day. Most of the people who come in can't get their health benefits. People who don't have some type of medical plan are in trouble in this province, and that's not something that the pension plan will help. That's something that this government can help with.

I was a little distressed when I heard the member from Eglinton—Lawrence talking about an elderly couple with a disabled child. I see that. I was surprised at the number of people who have disabled children. It's embarrassing that we're expecting the parents to take care of them. This province is rich enough that disabled people should be looked after by this government. It's a shame that there have been no increases for 10 years. We met with the groups, and they've had no funding increases for 10 years.

We talked about people who get no respite. This is something that's not going to be solved by a pension

plan. This is a problem with this government and priorities. They talk about one third of the people having pension plans. Most people in this province have saved for themselves. RRSPs and the different plans have enough money that only 13% of the people actually need help.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General is on a roll.

Mr. Jim McDonell: So we should be doing something to look after the 13%, not the 66%—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General is now warned.

Mr. Jim McDonell: —that would cause this province to be bankrupt. We have to start looking at priorities and directing our funds wisely. Developing another pot of money that this government gets their hands on is the wrong thing to do, because when people need this money in 30 or 40 years, when they need it, it won't be there. We've seen this time and time again. They've doubled the revenue that they're taking in, but we're not seeing the results. There should be a lot of caution towards this, and that's why we have a problem with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand again and address Bill 56 and respond to thoughtful comments from my colleague from Windsor West, who reminded us that of course pensions for auto workers and active retirees really contribute to our communities. Representing Oshawa, we have our strong Local 222, and I've had many opportunities to meet with different pensioner groups.

1750
It is important to stand here and not just talk about the ORPP but to talk about existing pensions and ensure that we are prioritizing them. There are two conversations happening at the same time: this new plan and ensuring that it is developed and designed for those who don't have a workplace pension, and to focus on securing and strengthening and protecting existing pensions.

Recently, GM committed to doing business in Ontario and to continue doing business in Canada. That's very important for those in Oshawa who now know that their pensions are secure, at least in the foreseeable future.

But as my colleague mentioned, some existing pensions are insufficient to provide for people in their retirement. I think those individuals need to be factored into the conversation, as we've talked about, when we're looking at specific design features of this new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and talking about comparability. I would challenge the government to look at the arguments for universality and how to include more people, to look at those arguments so that you're not just comparing plan to plan but specific situations, people to people.

My colleague also mentioned CPP expansion. We all agree that would benefit the most and be the most

effective. We look forward to that happening under our soon-to-be Prime Minister Thomas Mulcair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand and talk about the future of Ontario seniors and talk about the importance of this pension plan in making sure that seniors of the future can live a reasonable life, a life that isn't filled with poverty. I can't for the life of me understand how anyone could argue against that.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'd really like to call on the opposition to allow the debate to collapse and send this on to committee. The bill has been debated for nine hours plus; over 56 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. Listening to the debate, it's clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill, with a few exceptions. I'm calling on the opposition parties to help us move forward with this important piece of legislation so we can continue to debate other bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor West has two minutes.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the Attorney General, the members from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry—I did have to write that down to remember it—Oshawa and Newmarket-Aurora for their comments.

I'm happy to hear that the Attorney General acknowledges the importance of portability when it comes to pensions. That's a great concern for many people.

The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry touched on some affordability issues and the cost of living. Again, the cost of living is quite high. We have people who are deciding between paying a hydro bill and being able to eat. That's a very unfortunate circumstance, and that shouldn't be happening. If those people didn't have to make a decision like that, if the hydro rates weren't so high, they would likely have the money to put aside into a pension plan of their own. So I would call on the government to address those issues and make life more affordable for everyone across Ontario.

The member from Oshawa talked about protecting pensions across the board, not just public pensions but those from private companies as well. I know I touched a lot on the auto sector and the manufacturing sector. But there are other sectors as well that have private pensions, and the people who devote their lifetime to working in these businesses need to know that when they're ready to retire, their pension is safe, that a company can't just close up shop and leave, and they've lost everything that they have worked for.

The member from Newmarket-Aurora talked about poverty. Again, I believe that goes back to talking about making life more affordable for everyone. The government certainly needs to do a lot of work around poverty and making life more affordable, giving people the opportunities to be able to save for their own future, for education, for a home and for a life in post-retirement.

So, again, anything that would support someone having security in their retirement, I think, is a good direction to be moving.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1755.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frentenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
		Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

Anti-bullying initiatives

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2368
Hon. Liz Sandals	2368

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim McDonell	2369
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2369
Hon. Michael Coteau	2369

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Jennifer K. French	2369
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2369
Hon. Steven Del Duca	2370

Research and innovation

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2370
Hon. Reza Moridi	2370

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Victor Fedeli	2371
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2371

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Wayne Gates	2371
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2371

Accès à la justice

Mme Marie-France Lalonde	2371
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2372

Use of question period

Mr. Jim McDonell	2372
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2372

Members' photo

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2372
-------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. John Fraser	2372
Ms. Soo Wong	2372
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2372
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2372
Mrs. Cristina Martins	2373

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Wind farms

Mr. Victor Fedeli	2373
-------------------------	------

Labour dispute

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2373
--------------------------	------

Civic awards / Prix civiques

Mme Marie-France Lalonde	2373
--------------------------------	------

Veterans

Mr. Bill Walker	2373
-----------------------	------

Affordable housing

Mr. Paul Miller	2374
-----------------------	------

Pat Rosebrugh

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2374
----------------------------	------

Pesticides

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2374
----------------------------	------

Covenant House Toronto

Mrs. Cristina Martins	2374
-----------------------------	------

Dhun Noria

Ms. Soo Wong	2375
--------------------	------

MOTIONS

Appointment of Information and Privacy Commissioner

Hon. James J. Bradley	2375
Motion agreed to	2375

Appointment of Financial Accountability Officer

Hon. James J. Bradley	2375
Motion agreed to	2375

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Anti-bullying initiatives

Hon. Liz Sandals	2376
------------------------	------

Repetitive strain injury

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2376
-------------------------------	------

Anti-bullying initiatives

Ms. Sylvia Jones	2377
------------------------	------

Repetitive strain injury

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	2377
---------------------------	------

Anti-bullying initiatives

Mr. Peter Tabuns	2377
------------------------	------

Repetitive strain injury

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2378
--------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2378
----------------------------	------

Automotive industry

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2378
--------------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Soo Wong	2379
--------------------	------

Trespassing

Ms. Sylvia Jones	2379
------------------------	------

Automotive industry

Ms. Jennifer K. French	2379
------------------------------	------

Employment practices

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....2379

Road safety

Mr. Norm Miller2380

Automotive industry

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky2380

Distracted driving

Ms. Soo Wong.....2380

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim McDonell.....2380

Automotive industry

Mr. Wayne Gates2381

Government services

Ms. Soo Wong.....2381

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....2381

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015, Bill 56,
Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2015 sur le Régime de retraite
de la province de l'Ontario, projet de loi 56,
Mme Hunter**

Mr. Jim McDonell.....2382

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong2383

Hon. Liz Sandals2383

Mr. Garfield Dunlop2384

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....2384

Mr. Jim McDonell.....2384

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong2385

Mr. Grant Crack2386

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....2386

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....2387

Mr. Granville Anderson2387

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong2387

Mr. Joe Dickson2388

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris2388

Mr. John Fraser2389

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....2389

Ms. Catherine Fife.....2389

Ms. Sophie Kiwala2390

Mr. Jim McDonell2390

Mr. John Fraser2390

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson2391

Mr. Wayne Gates2392

Mr. Mike Colle2392

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....2393

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....2393

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson2393

Ms. Catherine Fife.....2394

Mr. Shafiq Qadri.....2395

Mr. Randy Pettapiece2396

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....2396

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....2396

Ms. Catherine Fife.....2396

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....2397

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur2398

Mr. Jim McDonell.....2398

Ms. Jennifer K. French.....2399

Mr. Chris Ballard2399

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....2399

Second reading debate deemed adjourned2400

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 25 February 2015 / Mercredi 25 février 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2015, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2015 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal	
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2349
Mr. Arthur Potts	2351
Mr. Randy Hillier	2352
Mme France Gélinas	2352
Hon. Reza Moridi	2353
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2353
Mr. Chris Ballard	2353
Hon. Michael Chan	2354
Ms. Soo Wong	2354
Mr. Yvan Baker	2355
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2356
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2356
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	2357
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2357
Mr. Chris Ballard	2357
Mr. Jim McDonell	2358
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2359

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Julia Munro	2359
Mr. Mike Colle	2359
Mr. Norm Miller	2359
Ms. Catherine Fife	2360
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2360
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2360
Ms. Catherine Fife	2360
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2360
Ms. Jennifer K. French	2360
Mr. Grant Crack	2360
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	2360
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2360
Hon. Steven Del Duca	2360
Ms. Soo Wong	2360
Hon. Charles Sousa	2360
Hon. David Oraziotti	2360
Mr. Han Dong	2360
Mr. Norm Miller	2360
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2361

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2361
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2361
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	2361
Mr. Steve Clark	2361
Hon. James J. Bradley	2361
Hon. Michael Coteau	2361
Mr. Grant Crack	2361
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2361
Hon. Mario Sergio	2361
Mr. Arthur Potts	2361
Mme France Gélinas	2361
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2361

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Christine Elliott	2361
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2361

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Christine Elliott	2362
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2362

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2363
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2363

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2364
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2364

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim Wilson	2365
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2365

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2366
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2366

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Arthur Potts	2366
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2366

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Bill Walker	2367
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2367
Hon. Charles Sousa	2367

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2367
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2367
Hon. Charles Sousa	2368

Continued on inside back cover

HAZON
X1
-D23

Gouvernement
Publication



No. 49

N° 49

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

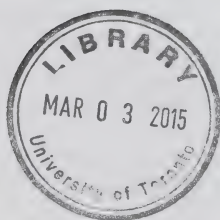
Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 26 February 2015

Jeudi 26 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last met the member from Windsor West, from the NDP caucus, completed, and now it's rotation for further debate.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Two minutes, Mr. Speaker? Is that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. Rotation. Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm a little disappointed that the government members did not wish to participate in this round but maybe the next round they will participate.

Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act—my poor colleague has just come in and I have his desk covered in paper. He'll have to—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: They should be speaking.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, we already mentioned that they should be speaking. But anyway, again, next time.

This was in the election. It wasn't the thing you heard at the doorstep all the time because they couldn't believe a government would actually come in and put more taxes on businesses.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The member from Peterborough likes to interject in the discussions, which is absolutely fine—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, it's not.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Actually, the Speaker says, "No, it's not." So there you go: a higher authority than I, Jeff—or the member from Peterborough.

I can tell you that the businesses are none too happy, but the key—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: They don't care about businesses.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, they don't care about businesses but they pretend to over there. Businesses don't believe it.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, we'll do a few little quotes for you. We'll do some quotes for you later on.

The key difficulty with the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan outline is that they're trying to address a problem that doesn't exist. Studies by McKinsey and Statistics Canada show that about 80% of Canadians have more than adequate retirement income.

First of all, the government is using—I'm going to say ORPP from now on—the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan to distract from the real economic crisis in Ontario, which is the \$300-billion provincial debt and the \$12-billion deficit. The government debt is increased by \$1.4 million every hour and \$33 million every day. I know those are a lot of numbers, and the average person maybe isn't paying attention—they're just actually trying to get by and how they can pay their hydro bill, really. Those are huge, huge numbers. We already had Moody's, I believe it was this week or at the end of last week—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: End of last week.

Ms. Laurie Scott: End of last week. Moody's gave us another scathing report, saying that our debt is worse than Quebec's, and that's quite bad. But the government again tends to ignore what these rating institutions say, and ignore what business and the average person says, really. They have not provided any economic analysis of the ORPP. They don't care how many jobs will be lost. Their own Ministry of Finance said there would be hundreds of thousands of jobs lost if they bring it in.

The government has not identified exactly who will be forced to join this ORPP. They have not defined "comparable workplace pension plan." It's certainly something that many people have responded to. I encourage all my chambers of commerce to certainly give you feedback so that you on the Liberal side can't say, "Everything is okay in my riding," because it's not okay in your ridings.

The government hasn't divulged how much the ORPP will cost to administer. They have not identified what will happen with self-employed Ontarians and what will be the minimum threshold for earnings. Why is the maximum earning threshold nearly double the threshold of the CPP? Will employees under the age of 18 be exempt from the ORPP?

The government has tried to convince the public that the ORPP will operate like the Canada Pension Plan when, in fact, it will be modelled on the Quebec Pension Plan. It's funny, not really telling the exact accuracy—can I put that word out?—to the people of Ontario.

The government has not been clear with Ontarians that their \$29-billion infrastructure plan cannot happen without the Ontario Registered Pension Plan. The government has eroded public trust so deeply over the past decade with their billion-dollar scandals and spending mismanagement that why would the people trust this government with another dime of their hard-earned income—nobody is listening.

Finally, I have not received any indication from any Ontarian or Ontario business that they're in favour of this proposal. I have only received lengthy, well-researched letters in opposition to the Ontario Registered Pension Plan, and I'm certainly going to share them with the government so they get the same letters that I'm getting.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I'm sure all the guilty people know who they are. I'm trying to get some quiet. If you could just come to order, I'm sure the speaker wants everybody to listen. Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Let's start with what the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has said on this topic. The CFIB presented its sound analysis of the ORPP at the pre-budget hearings held by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs less than a month ago. At the hearings, the CFIB vice-president, Mr. Plamen Petkov, commented on the lack of public understanding of the ORPP proposal: "I'm not quite sure, though, that the average Ontarian actually understands that this is going to be money coming from their paycheque. I think they are going to realize that after they see that deduction in 2017 onwards."

Just back to my original point, people in the election weren't really understanding the impact this was going to have on them, if they were thinking about it at all. Most, in my area of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, were thinking that they couldn't pay their hydro bill, and how were they going to put food on the table.

Anyway, back to the CFIB, "I think there is a big education component here that is missing from the whole debate on things such as, it is not a free plan; it is not something the government is giving to the people; and there's also the fact that it's going to take 40 years of contributions to actually get the benefit."

"So it is really a combination of different charges that, as a small business owner, you either have to take from your payroll, meaning reducing your labour force, or you have to pass on to your consumer, meaning raising prices. If you keep raising prices, you're not going to be competitive and you'll be out of business pretty soon."

The people I explain this to say, "I'm going to lose my job." Up in Haliburton, they're like, "I'm going to lose my job, because my employer cannot afford to keep me on." And you see that across all the small businesses. They're having fewer employees, and the mom-and-pop shops, or whoever the owners are, are working longer hours.

So, the CFIB, which represents a huge number of businesses, is not wrong. I get the same feedback in my rid-

ing. So, I think the member from Peterborough—I invite him to come up on a tour of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

0910

Anyway, the CFIB did a poll to see what employers would do if the plan was forced on them. Implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: "Do you support the implementation?" Eighty-six per cent of Ontario businesses in the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said no—get the message. "If implemented, what impact would paying additional ORPP premiums have on your business?"

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Agriculture, will you come to order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's 2015, the member from Peterborough.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Minister, I'd ask you to come to order—second warning. Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: There's so much to say and I've only got a few minutes left here now.

So 86% of Ontario businesses in the CFIB said they didn't want it implemented. "What impact would paying additional ORPP premiums have on your business?" Sixty-nine per cent said they would freeze or cut salaries, 53% said they would reduce the number of employees and 52% said they would reduce investments in their business. So it's not just me making these things up, this feedback. This analysis tells us exactly what the business community is thinking about in 2015, not decades ago, as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is trying to tell us.

My office has also heard from the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association on this proposed ORPP. They stated that as an industry "we cannot afford an additional pension plan one made in Ontario. Many are living paycheques to paycheque to make ends meet. Your government"—the Liberal government—"is putting significant pressures on employers to deliver a new pension program...." That's what you're doing. You're putting it on the employers.

They went on to say—this is the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association—"The ORPP will likely limit economic growth in our industry and hit the youth the most." We already have high, high youth unemployment, so you're going to make that worse, the Liberal government. "Employers will hire less full-time employees, hire less youth, hire fewer employees and expect more of those that remain employed. A 1.9% increase in labour costs is a significant new cost to absorb in a low-margin industry where labour represents the largest expense. To add to this, the additional administrative costs required to meet an accelerated implementation timeline will only increase the negative impact on businesses."

With the addition of the ORPP, we will see the cost of doing business in Ontario continue to rise.

This government totally ignores what businesses are saying. They're asking people who can't pay their hydro bill, if they are lucky enough to have a job, to pay an extra 1.9% off their paycheque. They're asking their employer, who is having a hard time paying the hydro bill and wants to give jobs to local people—they are going to be taxed. And yes, it's a tax. We have the highest payroll taxes in the country; that will continue. We have the highest hydro rates in North America; that is continuing.

At what point do you not see that people are backed up against the wall? There is no margin for them. I can go on with stories, as I've said before, where people are selling their houses; they can't afford to stay. There's no question, businesses are leaving Ontario. They're not coming into Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I hate to have run out of time, but I have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to join debate this morning. I'm hearing from the member from Kawartha Lakes-Brock—am I correct there?

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Thank you. They disagree, of course, with the government's direction on the imposition of the ORPP. We have our own concerns about its implementation, as well, in the simple fact that it doesn't seem as though it will be universal, nor does it seem as though it will ultimately cover or service those most vulnerable in our society and in our province who are in desperate need of some retirement security.

This is not a new issue, Speaker. For decades we've seen that there has been an imbalance, inequality in terms of income, where the very wealthy are getting wealthier, the middle class is eroding and the poor are getting poorer. There's has been no real, tangible effort on the part of any government—specifically the provincial government, nor the federal government—to make any effort to buffer that. New Democrats have proposed our own plan, but as you see—this morning I woke up and I saw CBC News-world talk about the fact that RRSPs eat up a massive amount of the funding or the cash in administrative fees. They are not a vehicle for secure retirement. They aren't the vehicle of choice; they shouldn't be the vehicle of choice. However, it seems as though this government is going to rely on a private vehicle, ushering in private entities to manage, to organize and to direct these funds, rather than a solely public entity that would lower those administrative fees, give those retirees the most return for their buck and also guarantee and ensure retirement security.

They're on the wrong path. They're doing something, but we aren't sure it's the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It was entertaining listening to the member from Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I am somewhat fascinated by the Conservatives these days. They

cannot support a pension plan, but they support income splitting. I don't quite get this. Maybe the member from Kawartha Lakes-Brock can explain why her party thinks that upper-middle-income, middle-income and modest-income Ontarians should be paying a huge amount, taking billions on in costs, so that the top 10% of retired Canadians—who already are seeing faster income growth than they've ever seen before—can be even richer. Why does she not think that that's an enormous burden?

If you just simply could get the federal government to give up income splitting and put that money into the Canada Pension Plan, which is what we wanted in the first place, every single criticism you've made would evaporate in a nanosecond. But this is why the Conservative Party constantly loses seats and is going to lose the next federal election: because they're so ridiculous, from not believing in evolution to believing that stripping 80% of Canadians in their retirement of their income to support the highest income earners in the country makes sense.

The CFIB, I hate to say, is wrong. It's not an economic analysis; it's an opinion survey. Every economic analysis of minimum wage increases and pension benefits shows job growth and GDP growth. You cannot, my dear friend, produce a single study that says contrary, because it doesn't. So you're left to an ideological, single-owner organization pretending to be a substitute for chambers of commerce that does opinion surveys with no background or data. It is laughable.

You were opposed to the HST, which would reduce the cost of business by \$8.5 billion. You couldn't even agree with your federal cousins on that. But for some strange reason, you won't believe in evolution and you believe in income splitting. You're going to be the fourth or fifth party. Sudbury was just the beginning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to offer another view of the instability that this undertaking by the government is creating. I want to look at it from the point of view of the employee, who, all of a sudden, is going to have to have a deduction on his paycheque of 1.9%. For people who want to split hairs about whether it's a new tax, it doesn't matter. It's 1.9% coming out of his pocket. That's what the employee understands.

The employee also understands that there's a huge mystery around whether or not existing pension plans will be allowed. The government comes up with this notion of "comparable," but no one has a definition of "comparable." There are some pensions, then, that will be more expensive now than paying 1.9%, so there's going to be a disruption and instability over just the issue of whether you're in or you're out.

0920

One of the things about having a pension—because the government likes to compare it to CPP—is that it has to have many, many contributors. In the case of CPP, it's the entire country. In the case of the proposed bill here, you're looking at a relatively small number of people.

We don't know when this starts; we don't know when the first cheque is cut. It's a huge question mark for anyone contemplating what the government is suggesting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to join the debate today, having listened to the concerns of the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I appreciate the comments of the member from Essex; the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—his comments were quite entertaining; followed by the member from York-Simcoe.

I'd like to address something—I had the pleasure of speaking for 10 minutes to this bill yesterday—which was a common theme, which is affordability. The reason that we're looking at implementing the ORPP is in order to help people save for their retirement. I think ultimately, when you look at the cost of hydro, the cost of living in general, it is prohibitive for many people to be able to put money aside. Often they're faced with the decision of whether they're going to keep the lights and the heat on or whether they're going to eat. I think that's something that the government needs to be looking at: bringing the cost of living down so that people have the ability to put money aside and ultimately have some disposable income to spend in our communities.

I also spoke yesterday to private pensions. My riding specifically has a large manufacturing area, a large automotive sector, and all have private pensions through their companies. Unfortunately, we often see these companies—people work there 20, 30 years, thinking that at the end of their career they're going to have a solid pension. Unfortunately, too often we find these companies close up shop, leave town, and these people who have worked their whole life towards a pension no longer have that retirement savings. I think we need to come up with a plan to protect those people who have worked all their life for that security in their retirement.

I'd just like to reiterate again, I think it's important to give people the opportunity to save for retirement, and I think a big piece around that is the affordability.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. You have two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so glad that the government was so upset in my first 10 minutes of comments. I thank them for that. They were pretty negative on a lot of people that I quoted, so I guess they don't agree with anything the CFIB said; the hotel, motel and restaurant association—I could name many more quotes from many more organizations that are opposed to this. I ask their indulgence to make sure that when they are supposedly hearing from the public, they take into account these organizations that I mentioned, the people who tell me the impact on the ground.

I want to bring the point and the fact that besides it being a tax on employers of 1.9% that they have to find, it's a tax on take-home pay. So it's 1.9% off their paycheque, which most people can't afford. There's no question it's a double-whammy.

Should we do better education, getting people to plan for their retirement? Yes, we should. But a large majority of people in some areas of my riding struggle, as I say, to pay the hydro bill and the food bill. But you have to put out that there are other vehicles, if you have money, to set aside for retirement. The Registered Retirement Savings Plan is a venue to save for your retirement. You now have the tax-free savings account. I'm just going to mention the two. There are many vehicles that, if people had money to put away for their retirement, are there for them.

If they have money left when they pass on, that actually goes to their estate and to their family. When you create a government pension plan, that money is gone—that is, into the big pot. This way, people can choose the vehicle—and there are tax vehicles for pensions, for savings, for their retirement. They are out there; they can be used. The government does not need to create an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. That is, as my colleagues have said, a double-whammy, both on the employer and the employee, if you're lucky enough to have a job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say that I completely oppose what the Tories are saying in this debate. To say that every citizen in this province, including, I would argue, members of this assembly—that it should be up to them to decide how they're going to invest their dollars for retirement and that is going to make the problem of adequate retirement income go away, is a fallacy. I will argue that—out of 107 members in this assembly, how many people are able to retire at age 55—please put up your hand—with your own investments? How many of you can actually afford to retire at age 60?

The reality is we don't have a pension plan here in Ontario as MPPs. Most people don't know that. We're RRSP-based, and the reality is the money that we have in RRSPs has not done well. We've had years where we've made a few dollars on our investments, but we've had years where we've lost all those dollars of investment. Essentially, you've pretty well got the money that you put in; you really have not made any interest over the last 20 years that I've been in that plan. It's the money that I've put in that's still there—because I made some, I lost some, and when you balance it all out, you're lucky if you get 2%, 3% on average per year—if you're lucky.

What I find really ironic in this whole thing is that it's Conservative members who cancelled the Ontario pension plan for MPPs, but it is also Conservatives who are lobbying, trying to reinstate a defined pension plan for people in this province. So what is good for members should be good for the public.

I believe the best way to provide income for people in retirement is by having a defined pension plan. If you have a defined pension plan, you know what you're going to get at retirement, month in and month out; you're able to plan with your family, your spouse, what it is you're going to do in retirement and what you can afford to do. You're not left to the whim of the market and you're not

left to the whim of your own budgeting. Because the reality is that most people do not budget for retirement. Most people are more concerned about the here and now, and say, "You know what? I've got a truck that broke down," or "I have a water heater that's busted at home," or "I've got braces to buy for my children," or "I've got to pay for a college or university education." Those are the things that we as families and as parents have to deal with on a day-to-day basis for the majority of the time that we're in the workplace. It's just called trying to make ends meet.

So most families and, I would argue, 90% to 95% of us, don't have the ability to say, "Well, you know what? I can put \$1,500 a month away, so that I have enough money to be able to retire at age 55, in my own pension plan." Because that's about what you'd have to put away. If you start working at age, let's say, 20, and you can put away \$1,500 a month until age 55, you might have enough to retire on. But nobody can afford that because, quite frankly, most people are not working for that kind of money. The majority of people in our society are working for \$50,000 and \$70,000 a year, if they're lucky. That's why it's always better that we have a mechanism through the payroll, that there is a defined pension plan that says, "When you work, a percentage of your income is going to go, along with a contribution from your employer, to be able to provide a defined pension plan so that when you retire," at whatever the plan allows, 57, 60, 55 or whatever it might be, "you know you're going to get so much money per month to be able to plan for your own retirement," pure and simple.

We as New Democrats, under Andrea Horwath, who brought, I believe, the first such bill into the Legislature, introduced the concept of getting the federal government to increase the CPP so that the Canada Pension Plan becomes a defined pension plan for all of us who don't have a pension plan at work, and allow those who have a pension at work, like teachers and others, to opt out. If the federal government is not prepared to do it, what we said was that then Ontario should go on its own, but that's not our first option.

Our first option has always been that we should get the federal government to accept that we have some mechanism to increase the contribution to CPP so that rather than retiring on a meagre income on your Canada Pension Plan, it would be somewhat sufficient to be able to provide for retirement.

I'll just talk about my own situation. I make a good buck. I make 130,000-some-odd dollars a year as a member here and being a House leader. The employer, the Ontario government, puts about \$1,000 a month into my RRSPs, right? That's what I've got to retire on. It is not sufficient for me to retire at anything before age 65. So the only thing I have to look forward to—and I'm not complaining; I've had it pretty good.

The point I'm making is this: Most people, if they wait until age 65, with the current CPP, and they don't take the early retirement provision at age 60, are lucky if they're going to get \$900 a month. On top of that, they

will get their old age pension, and if they're lucky their spouse is the same age or a little bit older and you will get the old age pension and CPP from their spouse as well. Put all that together and you're lucky, collectively, if you are making \$2,500 a month, in my particular case. Most people are having to survive on that and less.

0930

I look at my community, and I'm sure every member of this assembly has the same story. A husband and wife retired; they retired on whatever pension arrangement they had. The husband dies, and the wife is left alone. More times than not, she has to sell the house because she can't afford to pay to keep the house going on what's left when it comes to income from CPP death benefits and her own old age pension. So the widow is trying to survive.

Most people don't have pensions. I look at the mining sector that I come out of, out of Timmins. Most of our mines did not have adequate defined pension plans. So those widows whose husbands died because of the work they did in these mines—they banged up their bodies or lungs and everything else—are having to retire, after the husband dies, and try to live on a CPP death benefit, which is about \$400 or \$500 a month, and their old age pension. They can't afford to keep the house going with \$1,200 a month of income, even though the house is paid and clear, so what I see is that most of them are selling off their houses in order to have a little bit of equity so they can afford to do something with their grandkids and have a little bit of comfort in their days of retirement.

So, yes, we need to up the Canada Pension Plan in some way, and if that's not possible, then, yes, we need to do something in order to provide a first step towards providing retirement income for people. If we leave it to the individual, as the Conservatives suggest, it will always be the same, and, I will argue, it's not even the top 10% but probably the top 5% of Ontarians, who have money, who will retire with a good income. The rest of us won't. It will be at the whim of the market, whatever we have in RRSPs.

I look at a good friend of mine who lives a couple of cottages over from me. The guy had about \$600,000 in RRSPs. At the last crash—remember the big one we had?—the value of his retirement pension was devalued by half. Guess what he did? He panicked and sold out, so he ended up with only half of what he was hoping to retire on, and that's what he has to survive on for the rest of his days. He did what the Conservatives suggested. He put money into his RRSPs, his own money. Every year, he put money into his RRSPs. He tried to provide for a retirement income. When the market crashed and he lost half of the value, he did what other people did: panicked and sold his investments. He's left with very little money to retire on. Now he's chewing that up at a pretty fast rate, and all he is left with is his meagre Canada pension, his old age pension, and his wife's old age pension and a very small CPP, because she only worked for about 10 years.

I disagree with the Conservatives on this one. I think that defined pension plans are the way to go, because at

least that way, people are able to know that when they retire, there will be a decent pension for them in their retirement years.

We are lucky. If we work in the public sector, most of us have a decent pension, except for members of this assembly: nurses, teachers, workers in the civil service. If you work for one of the larger employers in Ontario, like Ford or Falconbridge or any of those big companies, you probably have a decent private pension plan with your employer that was negotiated with your union. But the rest of us, which is, I would say, about 65% or 70%, worked for mom-and-pop operations or medium-sized businesses or were self-employed, and we don't have any mechanism to be able to provide for a pension.

Is this pension plan that the government is putting forward perfect? Absolutely not. I think there are things that we're going to want to talk about, once we go to committee, about how we're able to change it in some ways to make it a better thing for those people who retire. But it is a step in the right direction. It's something that Andrea Horwath advocated for for years before she became leader, and I know my friend Paul Miller, who is our critic, did the same, and it's something that we talked about over a couple of elections. The government is moving in that direction. That's fine; it doesn't matter where the idea comes from. The fact is, we're stepping out in that direction.

Can it be better? Absolutely. But I'd just ask the Tories: Let's stop this fallacy that if we only allowed people to provide for themselves, everything would be better. Look at the United States when it comes to their health care system. If you don't have an employer with a plan, you don't have health care, and it's the same when it comes to pensions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I share many of the views on Bill 56, the establishment of the Ontario pension plan, that have been articulated by the member from Timmins-James Bay.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I've taken the opportunity to review Hansard from the federal Parliament in 1963, 1964 and 1965, when then-Prime Minister Pearson, with the assistance of Mr. Douglas and others—because it was a minority Parliament—when the Canada pension debate came forward. It's interesting when I hear the members opposite, the official opposition. You can close your eyes and you can hear John Diefenbaker, George Hees, Davie Fulton. The same tired arguments that were made in 1963, 1964 and 1965 are being made again. I tell the members, take a look at them. They're great speeches, and they should deliver them.

It's interesting; it's interesting.

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: This has to go to committee. I think the quicker we get it to committee and bring people in to provide commentary on this will be very important.

It's interesting that when the Canada Pension Plan was finally passed, in 1965, it was the fifth version of that plan.

Mr. Pearson, the Prime Minister of the day, sent it to the parliamentary committee on finance. They heard delegations from coast to coast to coast, and came up with the plan, which was the fifth version.

This is all about philosophy, Mr. Speaker. It's about individual rights versus collective rights, and moving a society forward together. That's exactly what this pension plan does. It means we're going to provide for generations down the road, so that they have an adequate pension.

In fact, you would think the CFIB would be interested in that, because if you put more disposable income in people's pockets, they buy things.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm going to try to loop this back to the speaker who had 10 minutes, the member from Timmins-James Bay. He laid out a scenario that I'd like to expand upon.

The individual husband works all of his life. Let's scenario it out that he actually pays into the ORPP. Then he and his spouse retire. Then, unfortunately, the main earner dies. In this scenario, with the ORPP, there is no money for the spouse. That is the big difference between the ability to put money into your RRSP and the ability to put money into the ORPP.

What we're trying to explain—why we keep standing up and debating this topic is because there is a difference, and people have to understand. You could pay in your 1.9% off your paycheck for 40 years, and if you die the day after you retire, that money goes nowhere except to the government. Okay? That's the difference.

You have a system right now where your estate, your family, your charitable choice is getting the assets that you've acquired. Under the ORPP, the only person who gets the assets is the Liberal government.

Call me a little cynical, but I think the vast majority of Ontarians do not look at the Ontario government as great managers of our money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on our House leader, the member for Timmins-James Bay. He gave some important points of reference in terms of what we experience here under our pension plan and how wholly inadequate it is, in terms of providing real security and the ability to retire comfortably, which is, I think, what Ontarians want. They want a vehicle to be able to know that their money is being properly managed and invested, and that the return on the back side, when they do retire, will be adequate for the ever-increasing cost of living each and every day in the province of Ontario, which the government has a whole lot to do with. Whether it be energy prices or otherwise, it's getting more and more expensive, and I would guess that it will continue to be.

It's interesting to hear a member from the PC caucus rail against any type of vehicle or mechanism for retirement security. I would imagine that they would rely solely on the free hand of the market to dictate and to provide that mechanism.

0940

We heard just recently that some in their caucus don't believe in evolution, which is interesting, although they do believe in one of the aspects of Darwin's theory of evolution, which is natural selection, whereby the strong will survive, and by that I would imagine they believe that the rich will survive because they are then in fact the strongest. If that's the type of society we're trying to create here, where the more money you have the better off you're going to be, regardless of intervention or any type of effort on the part of the government, then we are indeed doomed to lower the standard of living in this province.

I would say, let's put our best minds forward. Let's put best practices forward. In fact, we know they exist in the CPP—very great returns, a strong plan and low, low administrative fees. The model is there. I hope the government takes on that model and champions it through this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Timmins—James Bay has, I think, outlined very clearly what the positives are about this particular proposal for a pension plan, an Ontario pension plan. I don't think there's anybody in the House who would not prefer to have the federal government take up its responsibility through the Canada Pension Plan and enhance it. There's a lot of support for that throughout the country.

What it does is it allows people of a modest income to have the opportunity to be able to participate in a pension plan so that when they retire they will have the chance to live a life they were looking forward to, rather than some who have to struggle and stay on for many years beyond what they had hoped to in terms of retirement or have to certainly scale way back on their living style because of the fact that they don't have an adequate pension plan. Now, we recognize that people just about to retire are not the ones who are going to necessarily benefit from this. But we have to look down the line at those who have to.

There have been many good speeches in the House on this. I think we've had about 10 hours of debate on this and they've been very valuable. The contributions that people have made have been valuable even though they become repetitive after a while; that's natural when a debate of this kind is going on. I'm glad to see about 63 members have spoken on this at the present time.

What I would like to see happening—I'm a great fan of committees. As we go to committee, I would like to say that we should have a good committee session taking place. I think there would be a lot of representations made by those who have a specific interest and some expertise who would come forward, and also there would be an opportunity to have amendments.

I think the member from Timmins—James Bay has made a compelling case for a pension plan, and I certainly urge members of the Legislature—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

The member from Timmins—James Bay, you have a two-minute response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, let me thank everybody for their comments and just end on this: It's rather unfortunate, the rules we have in this House, that as a member I'm only afforded 10 minutes to speak because the standing orders say that after six and a half hours we drop from 20 minutes down to 10. It's unfortunate, because at times—and I find myself in that position now—we have a number of members who wanted to speak. As a House leader, I want to make sure my people get their opportunity. It's not always about the leadership speaking; you have to allow your members to participate fully. But it means that somebody gets short shrift down the road.

There are times when you legitimately have a debate about a bill that you'd like to have because there are things that I would have liked to have talked about that I didn't get a chance because I only had 10 minutes. Now, I'll be afforded the opportunity, I guess, to go to committee and put those thoughts at committee, hopefully by way of amendment. But I think it truly speaks to the problems that we have with the whole concept of having time allocation in the standing orders and the whole concept of limiting speeches to a degree.

I don't think we can ever go back to what it was when I was here, where Mr. Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, would take the floor in opposition and speak for two days at a time because he was an eloquent speaker and he had things to say. But I do think that limiting to 10 minutes after six and a half hours is problematic and I think it's something that at one point I hope the government could see its way of looking at: How do you afford members the ability to have their say legitimately in debate, in order to make whatever we're doing here legislatively a better bill when it comes out of second reading and, finally, out of third?

The only other thing that I'll say is, I think history has proven that the best system for people to be able to have retirement income has always been a mandatory pension system at work. That way, you're able to provide.

To say that every citizen in Ontario is able to provide for their own, if they had the opportunity—first of all, a lot don't have the opportunity, and some people just won't do it because they're doing other things.

Let's see where this brings us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I'm very honoured to speak on Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan—

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm just very reluctant, now that I see the government House leader speaking—just for your benefit, I want to remind you of two standing orders. One is standing order 14, which disallows out-of-order mo-

tions. I've had 19 members of my caucus who still want to speak to this bill. Nineteen members haven't spoken. I just want you to realize, in case the minister talks about rule 23(c), "Repetition," that there has been no repetition on our side—so, 14 and 23(c).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hear you clearly, but it's not a point of order.

Minister?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. Some precious time got taken on things that I want to talk about, because this is a very important issue. This legislation would help create a savings tool for the people of our province, and it is designed to give people a secure floor they can rely on.

Speaker, I can assure you that in the last provincial election—that was less than a year ago, in May and June—this was an issue that was clearly articulated in our campaign platform. The need to have retirement income security, the need to create an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, was front and centre of our campaign. In fact, our Premier, while campaigning, spoke to this issue on many, many occasions. It was a commitment we made to the people of Ontario, that if we were re-elected as their government, we would bring in, by 2017, an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I don't need to remind you that during that campaign, or as a result of that election, the people of Ontario gave us a very strong majority mandate to act on our commitments, one of the big ones being the creation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

I can also share with you, Speaker, from my own experience in my own community of Ottawa Centre, that this is an issue that I had an opportunity to discuss many, many times with my constituents. From visiting constituents door to door to debates within the community to coffee meetings, this was an issue that came up often. A majority of my constituents support the creation of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Many people told me that the best way to deal with this is actually to enhance the CPP, the Canada Pension Plan, and I totally agree with them. I totally agree with them. I think this is the best way to ensure that we have retirement income security for hard-working Canadians who do not have a workplace pension plan, like the members here in this House, and who should benefit from an enhanced CPP. The Canada Pension Plan already exists, and we know that system works. But we also know that at the current level the CPP exists, it does not pay well. It does not allow somebody who will retire to live with dignity. The best way to address that situation, that circumstance, is by enhancing the CPP.

We know that there has been a complete abdication of responsibility from this current federal government. They do not want to address that very important issue, even though we've got near unanimity across the country, among all Premiers, that they want to ensure, they want to see, some sort of enhancement of the CPP.

0950

But we've seen again and again and again the federal government, the Prime Minister and the finance minister

standing in the way of having a secure retirement income. So it does not leave us any choice. It does not leave us any choice but to move forward with the creation of an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan so that we are able to look after hard-working Ontarians who do not have the opportunity to save enough now, so that when they retire, they have sufficient income security.

The other point I make, Speaker, is that it helps us as a society. If those people do not have the means to live in a secure way in their retirement, who is going to help them? It will be us, the state. We would have to help them, because this is the kind of compassionate society we are. We have a social safety network in this province and in this country, thankfully. We will not let those people go homeless. We will not let them go to food banks. We would have to do something. The cost of dealing with this issue later on, when those people are struggling or suffering, is going to be much higher than not taking action now. If we take action now, if we create this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, we are going to be able to help a lot of people and save future costs.

Speaker, this is an important bill. As we know, we introduced this bill in December, as per our commitment. We have allowed debate on this bill to continue. We have reached six and a half hours of debate so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill. This bill has seen over 10 hours of debate and, according to my last count, we have had 64 MPPs who have spoken to this bill. There has been considerable debate on this bill, and we have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order?

Mr. Steve Clark: There are four members of my caucus who haven't spoken to that bill. They're sitting here in the House waiting to speak to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That is not a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker.

As I said, there has been considerable debate. We've heard many points of view. It is time that we end second reading and take this bill to committee. Let's have all our stakeholders come in and engage in a meaningful conversation—to hear from Ontarians from across the province on this very important bill. In committee, members will have the opportunity to speak, of course, and to hear from constituents, from stakeholders, from partners, from the province, and, of course, have the opportunity to move amendments to the bill.

At the same time, this House can move to substantive debate on other matters. There are a number of important pieces of legislation that are already introduced, which the government would like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process: things like Bill 6, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act; Bill 37, the Invasive Species Act; Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act; Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act; Bill 49, the On-

tario Immigration Act; and Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

We'd like to spend time debating some of the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we cannot until Bill 56 is dealt with. As a result, Speaker, I move that this question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Given the duration of the debate to this point and the number of members who have been able to participate, I'm going to allow the motion.

Mr. Naqvi has moved that the question now be put.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / *Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the members from Northumberland—Quinte West, Durham, and Mississauga—Streetsville.

I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. I'd like to say a few words about my community of Ottawa South, where I've lived all my life and have seen it change over some 50 years.

I come from a community that's wonderfully and beautifully diverse. You can see it when you go into our schools. Often I go into schools, when we're back during constituency weeks and on Fridays, and our schools are just a beautiful cultural mosaic. I think that we have in Ottawa South 140 different nationalities and over 70 languages, and you can see that in the schools. Ottawa South is also home to one of Canada's largest Arabic-speaking populations. That happened through waves of immigration. It began 50, 60 years ago. There are many Lebanese immigrants who have built businesses and built up our community.

Actually, one of my predecessors in this seat, Dalton McGuinty Sr., had a saying. He didn't like the term "new Canadian." He said there are only new, newer and newest Canadians. What that meant is, this country was built on

immigration. That's what our strength is. We've brought the world together. That's how we've built the community of Ottawa South; that's how we've built Canada.

I'm pleased to support the changes that are in this bill. Of course, the overriding importance of this bill is its potential for economic benefit to our province. As a shared jurisdiction with the federal government, on immigration, they've made some recent changes. Bill 49, if passed, would include a vision and objectives for immigration to Ontario; authority to establish and govern Ontario immigration selection programs; authority to establish and govern settlement and integration programs; authority to set targets for Ontario selection programs; authority to establish employer and recruiter registries; a compliance and enforcement regime; authority to directly or indirectly collect, use and disclose personal information to maintain program integrity and deter immigration fraud in Ontario selection programs.

Now I'd like to speak to one of the changes in this bill, which is the amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act to align requirements in the RHPA with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act related to the timelines in decision-making and access to records. These changes were requested by the Fairness Commissioner.

I think we have all experienced in our communities people coming to our offices, or people that we meet at events, who have come to our country and have been trained as teachers, as nurses, as doctors, as engineers. They have made the effort to acquire these skills—another jurisdiction has supported them in acquiring these skills—but they can't find work in their chosen field, in the thing they have decided to do with their life. We feel for people, because we understand how we would feel if we were in that position, if we were not able to use all our skills to the fullest extent of our abilities. There's kind of a moral and ethical thing when you see that. You say, "That's not just."

The other thing that we have to consider is, it's in our economic self-interest to support people who have skills that have been acquired and paid for in another jurisdiction, and all we need to do is either recognize those skills or help them get to the standards that we have here in our country. So I think this change in the bill is very important. It's something I feel very, very strongly about, not only from the perspective of being fair to people but from the perspective that it's an economic benefit to our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

1000

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: This particular piece of legislation, once we debate it and pass it—I think it has somewhat of a special meaning for me.

I'm an immigrant, Speaker. I was 12 years old. As of almost two weeks ago, 55 years ago, we landed in Halifax, so if one does the math, you know how old I am. My father came in 1959. My mother, my sister and I came in 1960.

We are so delighted—my family is; I'm sure other families across this province are—that not only Ontario but Canada has adopted us as Canadians. Shortly after, as soon as we could qualify to become Canadians, we all became Canadians, all four of us.

It's not that I don't cherish my heritage, because I think heritage is very, very important. That's where I was born, and, obviously, there are lots of ties. I still have a lot of relatives in my hometown where I was born.

Whenever I get an opportunity to talk about immigration, certainly it has got that side of me. I'm not pretending. As I speak, I'm living the vision.

Back then, immigrants gathered around large urban centres. Frankly, at that time, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, a lot of immigrants were of the construction type of immigrant, who worked very hard to build Ontario to what it is today. I remember my father—then, the labour laws weren't as they are today. That's not to say that workplaces where he worked took advantage of him. Certainly, they did the best they could.

For Ontario and Canada, immigration has become a staple. I think places like Ontario, like large urban centres, depend on immigration. It's sort of a leaning post to an economic driver. It's part of what drives our economy.

Today, I see immigration is much different than it was then. Then, as I said a minute ago, immigration centred around large urban centres—the Torontos, the Ottawas of this world—but today, immigration is spreading its wings. For example, in the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, Northumberland county is a portal, where potential immigrants who want to come to Ontario now have a place to explore the beautiful Northumberland county, with its seven municipalities. The city of Quinte West—I had a good chat with them just after the election in June. Obviously, they're looking for immigration to expand their well-being.

I guess what I'm saying is that immigration has become more and more of a staple, as part of our economic drivers.

We know that immigration is the responsibility of the federal government; I think we all know that. But I think we need to be able to create, with this piece of legislation, what's important to us here, to make sure that as we get into the selection process, we get the type of immigration that will work well for Ontario—and not to be selfish. When I talk about what has to work well for Ontario, and part of that Ontario mix, it's those immigrants. In the immigration piece, for any immigrants who want to make Ontario their home, we want to make a special place where they feel at home.

It's challenging. Sometimes I wonder, for example, what made my mother and father decide to come to Canada. It was obviously for a better life for them, but also for my sister and I, and we're so, so grateful for that.

We've got to make sure that we have a piece of legislation at the end of the day that makes that transition as smooth as possible; that makes sure these immigrants who come to this great province, and this great country,

land in a place they can call home, because we all want to feel at home at the end of the day.

Speaker, I would say to you that, as we debate this, I'm going to certainly pay close attention to make sure it hits those marks that are needed.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, this obviously needs debate. Hopefully, we keep in mind also that we don't use this as a political ploy, as we did with some other pieces of legislation, to just hold things up, because there are people who want to come to Ontario. There are people who want to call Ontario home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'm honoured to speak to this debate.

Immigration is vital to Ontario's success and growth. Ensuring that it's accountable and sustainable for current and future Ontarians is extremely important. Our demographics are slowly changing, and the Ontario of today owes itself, in large part, to the wonderful people who choose to call Ontario their new home. We must make sure that our province remains a viable option for people from around the world, and we must make sure that we are welcoming to those who want to bring their families here.

There are many difficulties faced by those who wish to immigrate to any part of this country. Much of that comes from the seemingly simple task of establishing yourself with a place to live and a place to work. There are usually many hurdles and hoops that one must jump through in order to achieve this legally and effectively. Offering programs for foreign nationals who wish to come here to work is an excellent way to re-evaluate how we help to welcome new Ontarians and new Canadians.

Giving them the opportunity to move more easily through the transitional period will give them more of a footing when they settle here and will give them a better chance at making a lasting effort to stay and become citizens.

Employers who employ foreign nationals will also benefit, in that they will have a streamlined way through the government to provide and offer working opportunities in a consistent and centralized way. This should make it easier for them to coordinate the process.

Of utmost importance are, of course, accountability and transparency. I am glad to see that the ministry is taking this into account. Providing for the inspection and investigation of new programs will be vital to ensuring, to those who participate in them, that the process is fair to existing Ontarians, who deserve to have faith in the system. Of even greater impact is the provision for appealing selection decisions, and giving a voice to those who may wish to become Ontarians, but feel they have missed their opportunity and wish to have their case heard.

Navigating the immigration process throughout our country is a joint effort. It is reassuring to know that we are doing our part as a province to make it work for those who wish to become Canadians. Working with the gov-

emments of Canada and of our fellow provinces and territories is necessary, but we must also ensure that the process is fair and equitable to Ontario and to all Ontarians. It is reassuring to know that our minister is taking the steps required to make sure that this is a reality.

Ontario is one of the greatest provinces in this country, although you might not hear that from the opposition. They try to tear Ontario down at every instance, but, as a government, our effort is to build Ontario up. That's what we're doing. Building Ontario up is welcoming new immigrants who can provide new skills to this great province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to stand up and to join this particular debate, to talk about a natural resource that exists everywhere in the world but disproportionately chooses Canada.

1010

As you read the news, you think to yourself: Gosh, it's awfully gloomy everywhere else in the world and it seems like people are giving up hope in the country in which they were born. But they're finding that very hope by coming to this country and this province and this region of this province.

In Ontario, when we talk about revising our policies and procedures regarding immigration, it's because that's one of the engines that has helped build Ontario. We are now the elephant in the room in terms of population and economy. We're the biggest entity in the entire industrial heartland of North America, the Great Lakes and the Midwestern states. There is no state or province with more people in it than Ontario. There is no economy larger than that in Ontario.

A large part of what has made Ontario the economic engine of the heartland of North America has been the new Canadians who have arrived from all over the world with the capacity to do business everywhere in the world. We speak every language in the world. We understand the world's customs. We know what the world needs. Moreover, when we talk about the process of attracting the best talent from everywhere in the world, of teaching them how to become passionate Canadians, of having them build our communities, we do it better than anywhere else in the world.

I was just reading the—

Applause.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you.

I was reading an article in the current edition of *Foreign Affairs*, a US publication. It was talking about the multicultural experience in Europe and the degree to which they were having problems with it. It brought back to mind some of the time I spent chairing the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Speaker, I know you've chaired this committee, so you can probably share this experience. We would have our incoming delegations from wherever and, along with the Speaker, the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly would be invited to lunch, to sit down with the elected

members from—fill in the blanks, because they came from everywhere in the world.

They would walk around downtown Toronto and they would say, "We are just blown over by the diversity here in the province of Ontario." And they would ask questions: "How do you go about doing this? How do we deal with attracting the best talent?" Then, the most important part, the settlement and integration: How do we enable new Canadians to get on with their lives so that there isn't the generation that comes from the old country, regardless of what the old country is, that has to be a lost generation? We know that the priorities of the generation that comes from the old country are pretty simple: Restart your career, get a place to live, get your kids in school and allow your family life to continue to go forward. At those lunches, we would talk about how we go about settlement and integration.

Inevitably, whoever was leading the delegation would often turn to me and say, "We could never do that where we come from." That's something that Ontario uniquely has in the world. It has been one of our big drivers in making us the most sought-after, the most prosperous place in North America. We can do that where we come from. We can take people who come from everywhere, who refer to the Almighty in every faith on the planet, who speak every language, who know every skill and trade. We can turn all of those people into part of our Ontario family within the same generation that they arrive. That's what we're here to do and do better.

The first thing this new Ontario Immigration Act seeks to do is to have a broader conversation, to say, even though we do this better than anywhere else in the world, let's talk about that vision and objective so that we can keep doing this better than anywhere else in the world. That's probably, more than anything else, the most important thing to do, because if we're going to look at that horizon, it would be nice to say, "Let's know what horizon we're sailing toward." That's something that's just a key part of this bill.

It also seeks to refine some of the laws and procedures that enable Ontario to select the best-quality newcomers and to be able to govern policies and procedures regarding settlement and integration. This is something that's done unevenly. The federal government is absolutely hopeless in its programs for settlement and integration. It is just wretched, and there's no better place to see that than in my home area of Peel region—at some of the money that is completely wasted by the federal government. We can do a lot better on this. Among the other things in this is the authority to set targets for Ontario's selection program.

Speaker, I could do with a lot more time. I'm just getting warmed up, but I'm out of time. Before you cut me off, I just want to thank you for the opportunity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have at least two nurses here with RNAO. I've got Denise Wood from Gananoque in Leeds county and I have Jean Lambert from Bishops Mills in Grenville county. Welcome, nurses, to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai de la grande visite aujourd'hui. Directement de Nickel Belt, on a M^{me} Lise Thomas et également le seul et unique Paul-André Gauthier, qui est avec l'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

I also have a long list of visitors in the gallery, starting with: Stephanie Blaney; Una Ferguson; Janet Hunt; Claudette Holloway; the one and only Nathan Kelly; Patricia Sevean; Paula Manuel; Denise Wood; and Carol Timmings. All are members of the RNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm also pleased to welcome members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario to the Legislature this morning for their annual Queen's Park day. I know there are a number of registered nurses joining us in the members' gallery as well as in the public galleries, but I want to especially welcome Doris Grinspun, the CEO of RNAO; Vanessa Burkoski, the president of RNAO; and Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, the past president of RNAO. They have a great day planned for all of us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is usually what happens when we have a large group of visitors, I'm going to ask that we get through these as quickly as possible. I'm not going to say that I'll do it as a blanket, because that didn't work the last time, but I am going to ask members to be very brief with their introductions, and no editorials.

The member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I'd also like to welcome the members from RNAO to Queen's Park today, and specifically welcome Stephanie Blaney, Una Ferguson, Janet Hunt, Claudette Holloway, Nathan Kelly and Angela Cooper Brathwaite. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Dianne Roedding from the Rainbow Nursing Interest Group membership executive today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Dianne.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislative Assembly today from the RNAO Thunder Bay delegation Michelle Spadoni, Carine Gallagher, Dawna-Marie Perry and Pat Sevean. Both my colleague Michael Gravelle and I were able to have breakfast with them this morning. We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to recognize Megan Herron from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to Minister Mauro, who was a class act and comported himself as I think we all should last night at the Osgoode conference.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm absolutely thrilled and pleased to welcome some members of the RNAO from

Hamilton today. We have Irene Molinar, Darlene Shermet and Leighanne Swance. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the family of one of our page captains, William Stuart, from the great riding of Kitchener-Centre. I would ask them to stand. They are: Dr. Christine Purdon; father Charles Stuart; big sister Mary Stuart, who also served as a page; grandmother Sylvia Purdon; cousin Laura Purdon; and godmother Mary Purdon. Welcome.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome Fiona Proctor and Cindy Baker-Barill to Queen's Park as members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. We're very proud of them.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Chloé Robert, trustee with Conseil scolaire Viamonde. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm very pleased and proud to welcome to the House today members of the Halton chapter of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, and in particular from my riding Karimah Alidina, Halton chapter president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Cheryl Yost, a neighbour of mine from the Monkton area, here with RNAO.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have a nurse here as well. I'm delighted to welcome Paul Koniec, who works at CAMH.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature today, once again, Mary Purdon, who is actually one of my constituents and works here at Queen's Park for the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. She's here with her family to see her nephew, William Stuart, who is the page captain here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to recognize Linda Holm from the RNAO and thank her for the invitation to breakfast this morning.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce five members of the RNAO from the Windsor area who are in the gallery this morning: Debbie Kane, Kelly Lawrenson, Dana Boyd, Ore Ayo-Olanayan and Jennifer Johnston, who is celebrating a birthday today. Welcome to question period this morning.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to welcome members from the Peel region RNAO: Jennifer Bintakies and Maria Harrison. Thank you for joining us.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, from my local RNAO chapter, Katie Wright. I'm sorry I missed breakfast, but I've talked to Katie. Katie, if you're here, welcome.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to introduce Barbara Hall, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. Barbara's husband, Max, is here, I think, and there are a number of her commissioners here. Welcome.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to welcome from OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association, Adam Yahn and Brian Graham.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Ottawa caucus, to introduce a group that we had the pleasure of meeting this morning with the RNAO: Mrs. Cecile Diby, Sandra Stec, Alwyn Moyer and Una Ferguson.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have the pleasure of introducing Nathalie DiLabio from SD&G, my riding. She attends St. Lawrence College and is the president of the nursing students association. Welcome.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to recognize Katherine Dunford of the RNAO. I had the opportunity to sit with her for breakfast this morning.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome three constituents from London West: Janet Hunt and Pam Bushell from RNAO; and Laura Vita, a nursing student from Western.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome members of the Halton chapter of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario this morning. Here with us today are Leanne Siracusa and Krystle Prior. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: On behalf of Kingston and the Islands, I welcome, from the RNAO, Megan Laan and nursing student Yessica Rivera Belsham. Welcome.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Julie Rubel, who is an RNAO member from St. Catharines.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would like to welcome Lynn Anne Mulrooney and Cathy Lacroix, and also the members of the RNAO environment committee, for the great work they're doing on climate change and on toxins.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd just like to welcome the RNAO delegation from Etobicoke Centre. There are three constituents, two of whom I met this morning: Angela De Guzman, Taissa Pavliuc and Ingrid Dresher. Thank you for coming.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome the members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario who are with us today. I enjoyed having breakfast with Hilda, who I've known for a very long time, and with nursing student Linna Feng—I want to give a particular welcome to her, and also to Maggie Sicilia, from York South—Weston.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce commissioners from the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal who are here with Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall: Ruth Goba, Fernand Lalonde, Julie Lee, Lawrence McDermott, Errol Mendes, Fiona Sampson, Bhagat Taggar and the executive director, Dianne Carter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just wanted to take this opportunity to introduce the members of the RNAO from my riding with whom I had breakfast this morning, from my riding: Carmen, Sonya, Claudette and a student, Llanto.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I understand, Speaker, one of our model parliamentarians has come back for a second round and he happens to be my constituent Brian Hopkins, from Guelph.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to welcome a constituent of mine, Bhagat Taggar, who is here, and also all of the members of the RNAO from Scarborough—Guildwood.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker, for giving me some good exercise today of getting up and down, up and down; it's great.

Two quick introductions: First I want to recognize again Professor Errol Mendes, who is a commissioner of human rights. He's a former professor of law of mine from the University of Ottawa and a constituent. Professor Mendes, welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, on behalf of the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, I want to welcome the family of page captain Arlyne James: her father, George James; grandfather Bill James; and uncle Paul James, who are in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to introduce two members of the RNAO from Sault Ste. Marie: Stephanie Blaney and Jennifer Flood. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? My goodness, we got them.

I too would like to welcome the members from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario from my riding and thank them for the breakfast.

Also, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation of members of Parliament and Deputy Speaker from Sweden. We welcome the members for their visit here and we thank them very much.

Applause.

USE OF PROPS IN THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I saw something this morning just before question period that I will be working on very quickly—I advise strongly against it—the use of props. If it happens, I'll deal with it immediately.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you said, "I'm not going to force someone to resign in the face of allegations that I do not believe to be true." Well, Premier, Pat Sorbara's cousin, the former Minister of Finance, once said the following when he was named in a search warrant. He said, "While I have no idea as to what the allegations are or the facts on which they are based, my responsibility ... is to step aside." Premier, why should Pat Sorbara not be held to the same standard? Why shouldn't she have to step aside while two OPP investigations are ongoing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much to the interim Leader of the Opposition for the question. He knows that I take this matter very seriously. He also knows that Greg Sorbara was an elected official and was

a minister of the crown. So he knows these are very different situations.

As I say, I've taken, and I do take, this matter very seriously. Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to co-operate fully, but I just remind the member opposite that this is an investigation that is not taking place in this Legislature. It's an investigation that's taking place outside the Legislature, and we will continue to work with the authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Your Deputy Premier said to the Premier "will not force the resignation of someone when the allegations against that person are baseless...." Now, Premier, I need not remind you—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Who are you taking to the woodshed today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Mr. Jim Wilson:—that that statement completely contradicts the findings of the Chief Electoral Officer. When a minister or Premier's office is under police investigation, former Minister Sorbara had wise words when he said, "Meanwhile it's appropriate for me to step aside from my responsibilities while the investigation occurs." Premier, why is it not appropriate for your deputy chief of staff to step aside? The media call her, next to yourself, the most powerful woman in the province of Ontario. She's as important as a cabinet minister, and probably makes more decisions than cabinet ministers in your government. So why is it not appropriate that she step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's interesting to hear the commentary from the member opposite, which I think actually reveals more about how he sees government working than it does about how government works from our perspective.

I want to just remind the member opposite what the Chief Electoral Officer said. The Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." So, Mr. Speaker, the investigations are entirely independent. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been retained. We will continue to work with the authorities, but that investigation takes place outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Your Deputy Premier has said that the Premier "has demonstrated a new and different and better way ... of dealing with opposition allegations." But the Chief Electoral Officer said that he has found a prima facie case of contravention of the Election Act, and he sent it on for further process and prosecution.

Premier, these are not "opposition allegations." These are findings of an independent officer of this Legislature. The investigation is not happening outside this Legis-

lature; in fact, it's happening just down the hall, in your office.

By continuing to stand by Pat Sorbara, you're embarrassing the office you hold and you are degrading the reputation of every elected member in this House, because people are starting to think this is simply business as usual. Mr. Speaker, this is Liberal business as usual.

Premier, will you finally have Ms. Sorbara step aside?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Start the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, while I've made repeated statements on this matter—I made a statement on Friday; I've answered questions in House—there's an investigation under way. I'll continue to co-operate with the process, but that process is entirely independent of government. It's independent of this House, and the member opposite knows that.

I understand the back-and-forth of question period. I understand it very well, but I really believe that accusing people of being criminals when there's an investigation going on is wrong. Just to remind the members opposite, what the electoral officer said is, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." So it is entirely inaccurate to say that the elections officer has made a finding in this case, Mr. Speaker. The electoral officer has left that to prosecutors and judges.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The Ontario Civilian Police Commission has said that all police service board members "have an obligation to respect, uphold and follow the law. While this is true for every citizen, it is even more so for individuals who have the legislated responsibility for ensuring 'law enforcement and crime prevention' in their community."

Premier, as you ignore the calls for you to have Gerry Loughheed resign, you also ignore the higher standard that is expected of Mr. Loughheed as chair of the Sudbury police services board. So will you finally do the right thing and ask Gerry Loughheed to step aside?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. Thank you. The interjections while I'm trying to get quiet are not acceptable.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said this, and I will say it again: We do not direct police services boards. They are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in their municipalities. I understand—

Mr. Steve Clark: The minister can ask for an investigation. It's right there in the act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—that the Sudbury police services board addressed this issue and voted for Mr. Loughheed to remain, and they will continue to make the determinations that they see to be appropriate. The investigation is ongoing. We will continue to co-operate and we will work with the authorities, but that investigation is happening outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The Ontario Civilian Police Commission says that members of police service boards have “a responsibility to conduct themselves with the ‘utmost circumspection and prudence’” and are expected to have “the highest levels of honesty and integrity,” and that this is most certainly the case for board chairs.

1050

Premier, while your appointee, Gerry Loughheed, is under two OPP investigations, his honesty and integrity are being called into question. I'll ask you: Don't you think the residents of Sudbury deserve, as chair of their police services board, a person who is above suspicion and held to the same standards to which other police services board members and board chairs are held?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question.

I've spoken to this issue before. Police services boards are accountable to their local communities. That's why we have police services boards, so that they can provide oversight for the local police services, so that they can ensure they provide adequate and effective policing within their jurisdictions. That's why, as we have seen in the case of Sudbury, the local police services board, which is made up of both municipal and provincial appointees, has looked into the matter and decided to keep Mr. Loughheed as chair of the board. We should respect that decision of theirs.

If there needs to be any further looking into this matter, the Ontario Civilian Police Commission is very well equipped, as an arm's-length body, to look into the matter.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Premier: The Ontario Civilian Police Commission has also said that “an obligation of the board to obey the law necessitates an effort to ensure the propriety of their actions when the question arises.” I think we can all agree in this House that the propriety of Mr. Loughheed's actions has arisen. In addition to Mr. Loughheed's normal responsibilities the board goes on to say he, or a board chair, “has a leadership role.”

Premier, you have a leadership role. Will you show some leadership, do the right thing, get rid of these bad apples, get rid of the person who's chairing the police services board in Sudbury, who is under suspicion? Just

clear the air, let the police do their job, let the courts do their job—let everyone have their day in court, and save your own reputation in the process.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member is fully aware, and I've stated before in this House, there is a code of conduct that is put in place through regulation and it's up to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, which has the responsibility to ensure that there are no breaches to the code of conduct. That is an appropriate process to have because it's at arm's-length from the government. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has no authority to suspend or remove a member of the police services board.

I suggest that the members in this House refrain from being judge and jury and everything in between and let the independent process, as we've said—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order—second time.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi:—through legislation, do their work.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier seems to think that Liberals did nothing wrong when Andrew Olivier was being offered a job. According to her convoluted logic, she seems to believe that what happened in Sudbury was actually noble, but when she's been asked who ordered this noble deed, she refuses to answer. It doesn't make sense. If she feels everything is okay, then there shouldn't be any problem whatsoever in answering the question: Who directed that Andrew Olivier be offered a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, as the member opposite knows, I challenge the premise of the question. I've said it many, many times. I take this situation very seriously.

There is an investigation going on, but that investigation is not going on in this House. It's going on with the authorities outside of the Legislature. We will continue to work with them. But I've said I take it seriously and we'll do everything in our power to work with the authorities and make sure they get all the information that they request.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier doesn't see any problems at all with offering Andrew Olivier “a full-time or a part-time job at a constituency office or appointments to boards or commissions.” If the Premier thinks there's nothing wrong, will she tell Ontarians who made the decision to dangle these jobs in front of Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the member opposite knows that I have talked about this in the House

and outside of the House. I have talked about the fact that I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury. We're very happy to have him. It was a tough decision for Glenn, to run for us and leave the NDP, but he made that decision, and we're very pleased to have him with us. He will be a strong, strong voice for Sudbury.

There is an investigation going on. That investigation is happening outside of this House. We'll work with the authorities, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last year, the Premier said, "Here was what was top of mind ... when I came into this office: How are we going to ... make sure ... questions that are being asked are going to be answered?" Good question.

My question isn't complicated, but it's very serious, and the Premier has refused to answer it 31 times. The Premier insists there was no wrongdoing in Sudbury, so I'm not sure why she's refusing to answer a basic question: Who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed those noble instructions to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, and I will read again what the Chief Electoral Officer stated—I remind the member opposite that Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. He went on to say, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

The leader of the third party has decided that she understands everything about what happened. She has got her own narrative and her own reasons for raising it in the way that she does. I understand those reasons. She's in a very tough spot. They didn't win the by-election in Sudbury, and I know that's a real problem for them.

The fact is, there is an investigation going on. It's happening outside of this House. I will work with the authorities outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier says that she made up her mind to appoint her candidate back in November, but as of December 12, her deputy chief of staff didn't know, her campaign director didn't know, the local Liberal king-maker didn't know, Andrew Olivier didn't know, the local riding association didn't know. In fact, nobody seemed to know. Does the Premier have any evidence to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, once again, I've made repeated statements on this matter. I made a statement on Friday that is in the public realm, and the leader of the third party can read it. Again, I'll repeat what I said there. I said that there's an investigation under way. That process is entirely independent of gov-

ernment and of this House. We respect the process, and I hope that the opposition parties do the same. We will work with the authorities outside of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier says that she decided to appoint her candidate back in November. She can't seem to find any evidence for her story.

On Tuesday, the Deputy Premier said, "The Premier listens to advice and then she has a conversation with her soul...."

Did the Premier have a conversation with anyone, other than her soul, about this decision, and can she back that up with evidence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that I have been very clear about what I decided in Sudbury. I decided that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

There is an investigation going on. That investigation is happening outside of this Legislature.

I am very proud of our new MPP for Sudbury. I am very proud of Glenn Thibeault. Glenn has been a strong advocate for the people of Sudbury. He ran for us because he knows how important it is to invest in people, in their talent and their skills; how important it is to invest in infrastructure. He knows that there's infrastructure that the people of Sudbury need in order for Sudbury to be able to thrive. He knows that it's important that people have some security in their retirement. That's why he ran for us, and that's why we're pleased to have him as our member, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nearly two years ago, the Premier said this: "Throughout the run-up to the leadership, I said that it was absolutely imperative that we open up the process and that we provide information...." That's not a very lofty goal; it's just the basics of good government. This is the 13th time the Premier has been asked for evidence, and Ontarians have still not got an answer.

1100

Now, I think it's absolutely imperative that the Premier opens up and provides information. Can the Premier provide any evidence at all that supports her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just speak to the first part of the question that the member opposite has raised, that is, the issues that I raised when I was running in leadership and my intention and then my commitment and my follow-through to open up the process that was ongoing at that point. I did that.

The scope of the justice committee was expanded. There were hundreds of thousands of documents that were brought before that committee. Dozens of witnesses came and talked about the situation of the cancellation of the gas plants. That process was opened up, and we changed the rules in terms of retention of documents and in terms of the siting of large energy infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I did exactly what I said I was going to do. I said we were going to change the process. We were going to open it up. That's what I did.

In this particular investigation, as I've said, it's happening outside of this House, and we'll co-operate with the authorities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. As one of your chief advisers, Ms. Patricia Sorbara must listen to a lot of your phone calls. On tape, she told Mr. Olivier that the Premier knew "how massive" of an ask this is. Sorbara told Mr. Olivier, "You're ... the third person I've ever heard ... ask this of." There was a lot of asking from your office, but not a lot of telling.

Premier, who are the other two people you asked to step aside? And did Ms. Sorbara offer them any appointments?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the investigation is happening outside of this House, and I will fully, fully co-operate and work with the authorities, as we all will. But the fact is that that investigation is not happening inside this House. It's a completely independent process. It's independent of government, and it's independent of this Legislature. We'll work with the authorities outside this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: My supplementary is back to the Premier. It's well known that Andrew Olivier wasn't the only person seeking the Liberal Sudbury nomination. The recorded call said that Gerry Lougheed and Patricia Sorbara talked to Marianne Matchuk about the nomination. Mr. Lougheed said, "Now Marianne ... has to just... get lost."

Premier, did your operatives tell Ms. Matchuk to just get lost? Or did they also offer her jobs, appointments or whatever?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Good morning, Speaker. I really do want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ontario PC Party on being the cover story of the current issue of National Geographic magazine.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will remind us all that my job is to try to reach some decorum in this place. I'd like all members to be helpful with that. Having done so, we would be able to finish our question-and-answer period in a way in which I know that everyone would want us to.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's a sincere congratulations. "The War on Science" article—this issue is on newsstands now. I would be happy to pass my copy off to you, maybe for your signature, Speaker.

I do think that the notion that—"Evolution Never Happened" is a cover story here; "Climate Change Does Not Exist." This is a wonderful synopsis of the PC Party of Ontario, and I want to say congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind everyone what I said about props.

Carry on, please.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. On December 12, Pat Sorbara said to Andrew Olivier, "You've been directly asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside to allow Glenn to have the ... opportunity uncontested."

Is that what the Premier, in her soul, had discussed before giving Pat Sorbara her instructions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times this morning, the investigation is taking place outside of this House. I take this matter very, very seriously, and I've spoken to it repeatedly. Elections Ontario has made a decision. They determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. The Chief Electoral Officer said this: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

So the fact is, that process has gone into the next phase, and that is the investigation that is taking place now. But it's taking place outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let's do some more soul-searching. On December 11, Gerry Lougheed said to Andrew Olivier, "So I come to you on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of"—yes—"Thibeault more indirectly, to ask you if you would consider stepping down—even more than that, Andrew, nominating him." Is that what the Premier and her soul had discussed before giving Gerry Lougheed his instructions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite is asking me whether I wanted Andrew Olivier to be involved in the party, I've said that many times. I wanted to keep him involved, as I hope the party opposite is working to keep their past candidate involved. I think it's important for leaders and members to reach out to people who have either lost an election or who have not been involved, to bring them back into the fold. I have said repeatedly that I think that that is a responsibility of leaders of a party.

But in terms of this particular situation, the investigation is happening outside of this House, and we'll continue to work with the authorities.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to the Premier as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Mr. Speaker, human rights are an essential staple in any democracy, and all Ontarians have a right to live free from discrimination, inequality and intolerance. The protection of human rights is a fundamental principle in this province.

This government has taken the most significant steps to strengthen our human rights in some 40 years to better ensure dignity and justice for all Ontarians. Our strengthened human rights system supports these rights by better enforcing the Ontario Human Rights Code and ensuring dignity by providing timely and efficient access to justice

for those who face discrimination. Unfortunately, I don't feel that this excellent leadership gets the appropriate notice. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the Premier as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, enlighten this House on how this government has ensured human rights are ensured for every Ontarian?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for the question, and I also agree that the defence of human rights is an essential part of our community and our role. I want to take this opportunity to thank Barbara Hall for her work as chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Thank you, Barbara.

Mr. Speaker, over the past decade, Barbara oversaw the work of the OHRC during the transition of Ontario's human rights system. The OHRC's mandate changed to focus on the big issues, looking for the roots of discrimination. Under the leadership of Ms. Hall, the commission tackled many challenges, some that were new and some that had been around for some time.

There are three particular areas that stand out to me: housing; mental disabilities, including addictions; and gender identity and gender expression. People didn't necessarily see the human rights value in these areas right away, but thanks to the hard work of Barbara and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, we've made great, great improvements for some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for her answer. The work that has been accomplished in this area is truly honourable, and it's a model for all other jurisdictions to follow.

I still feel as though this progress in an essential area of our province needs to be brought to the attention of not only the residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, but of all the residents of Ontario. I understand that, in 2008, the Ontario government commissioned a report in order to maximize the potential of the human rights system throughout this province.

Will the Premier in her capacity as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs elaborate on the expanded mandate of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and what areas have been changed during the wonderful tenure of Ms. Hall? I'm sure this House would be very appreciative to know what progress has been made.

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for his work at the municipal level. I know that he will carry that work on provincially.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission addresses the underlying causes of discrimination—that's what they exist to do. Through education, policy development and research, the commission works to preserve the spirit of tolerance that has long characterized Ontario.

Homeless people, people with mental health disabilities or transgendered people often didn't even know that they had human rights and didn't know what their rights were; and employers, service providers and educators

didn't know that they had responsibilities. The OHRC was part of a process to address these issues and to help break down barriers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my appreciation for the hard work and dedication of Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall. After more than 30 years as a community worker, lawyer, municipal politician and public servant, Barbara Hall will now be entering the next phase of her life.

Barbara, on behalf of all Ontarians, I want to thank you for your devotion to public service. Thank you very much.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, on Tuesday, in your absence, the Attorney General stated that under section 25 of the Police Services Act, you as Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services are unable to ask a member of the police services board to resign. That may be true, but that's not the question that was asked.

Minister, will you ask the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, the independent oversight body of Ontario police services boards, to investigate the inappropriate actions of Mr. Gerry Lougheed as laid out in the Chief Electoral Officer's report?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I would have hoped that the member would have used his valuable time to talk about his private member's bill, Ryan's Law, but he chooses to talk about issues that are not relevant to the lives and the well-being of Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock. While I'm at it, I'll remind all members that we don't make reference to someone's attendance here.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I have stated on numerous occasions before and a couple of times today, we know, in the case of the Sudbury police board, that they've looked at the matter, and they've decided to keep Mr. Lougheed as the chair of the board. We need to respect the jurisdiction of the local police service while an investigation is ongoing. If anyone feels that there has been a breach of the code of conduct of the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, they have the authority to initiate an investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Minister, it's inappropriate and very insulting to the people of Ontario to say that the decision to keep Mr. Lougheed as chair was made by the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board. That wasn't their call to make. Only the Ontario Civilian Police Commission can decide whether Mr. Lougheed gets to keep his job or not.

Minister, you know that if the Ontario Civilian Police Commission starts an investigation, Mr. Loughheed must step aside until the investigation is done and any subsequent hearings are heard. Why won't you ask for this investigation? What are you afraid Mr. Loughheed would say if you did?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, on this side of the chamber, we respect the process. We respect the independence of our investigative bodies. There's a reason that bodies like the Ontario Civilian Police Commission are created: so that there is a separation from decisions that are made by the government, the political arm of the government, and that of other independent agencies. Under section 25 of the Police Services Act, the Ontario Civilian Police Commission has the authority to initiate investigations and to look at the code of conduct. We should leave those matters to those independent bodies because it is within their jurisdiction.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. I know that the season of House of Cards is coming out tomorrow, but I'm not sure the Liberals realize that it's not actually a documentary. As much as Frank Underwood intrigues us, behaving like him is beneath the office of the Premier of Ontario.

When will the Premier start showing a little bit of respect for Ontarians and tell the people of our province who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed their instructions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reason I made the statement that I did on Friday and was very clear about the situation, and made that publicly outside of this House, was out of respect for the people of Ontario. Out of respect—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sergeant-at-Arms, confiscate the property.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order. Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I said in that statement is that I take this very seriously. I said Pat Sorbara will continue to fully co-operate with the authorities as the investigation unfolds. I said that clearly. I said that if charges were laid, then Pat Sorbara would of course step aside. On our review, we don't think that's going to happen, but that will be up to others to decide, which is exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer has said.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Deputy Premier this week said that she was bored of question period. I'm so sorry that the Liberal government believes that democracy is boring. It's clear that the Liberals believe that they're above the law, and apparently they're above answering our questions.

The Premier has a choice. She can continue to avoid answering our questions or she can treat Ontarians with the respect that they deserve. The question is this: Who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Loughheed their instructions to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have a deep respect for question period. I have a deep respect for the democratic process. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm here answering the questions over and over again.

As I said in my statement on Friday, Pat Sorbara will continue to fully co-operate with the authorities as the investigation unfolds.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Nipissing is heckling about the retention of information. I think the member for Nipissing knows perfectly well that we have changed the rules here. We have trained our staff. Everyone knows that we've changed those rules on the advice of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I just don't think he should get away with that, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll just conclude by saying that in the meantime, I'm not going to force someone to resign in the face of allegations that I do not believe to be true, but we will continue to work with the authorities.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: This question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, last month you announced a significant change to corrections policy that relates to transgendered inmates. Previously, inmates in Ontario were housed based on their primary sexual characteristics. They were unable to express their gender identity by selecting their own clothing and personal pronouns.

The people of Ontario understood that it was time to change this outdated policy. In our province, everyone should be free from discrimination and harassment. In our province, we want to make sure that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay, come to order.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: —everyone has rights. This means that the transgendered inmates housed in our—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you have it a second time, it will cost you.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: —must be given dignity and respect.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister explain the change in Ontario's policy towards transgendered inmates?

1120

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Sudbury for the opportunity for me to share this very important milestone.

Last month, I was proud to announce a new policy for transgendered inmates in our correctional facilities. This policy builds on Toby's Act and aligns practices with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Ontario Human Rights Commission guidelines. I want to take this opportunity to thank the commissioner, Barbara Hall, and the commission for their ongoing guidance on this very important issue.

Speaker, this policy will ensure that transgendered inmates are placed in an institution appropriate to their gender identity. They will be called by their preferred name and gender pronoun, and they will be provided the opportunity to choose the gender of staff performing searches. During these searches, they will be given privacy.

This policy was developed through extensive consultations across the province with civil rights groups and correctional working groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Minister, for your work in bringing the north to the table to consult on this important subject. I know many people and organizations, including the police service in my great riding of Sudbury, have put a lot of time into this issue.

This policy supports the government's obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code by helping to protect the rights of transgendered inmates. However, there are still some who may be concerned for the safety of transgendered inmates in our institutions.

Minister, you have stated that the safety and security of all inmates and staff is one of your top priorities, so it is vital that the rights of transgendered inmates are protected and their security safeguarded as well.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister explain what measures will be taken to ensure the safety of transgendered inmates while they are in our correctional facilities?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Indeed, the safety and security of all our inmates and staff is a top priority of mine and the government.

Speaker, in order to ensure their proper care, placement and safety, transgendered inmates will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Inmates will be consulted during the accommodation process. This will help determine the best housing option for the inmate. Instead of being isolated, transgendered inmates will be integrated into the general population, when possible, if that is their preference.

We had extensive consultations on this issue, including with trans activists from Sudbury and the Sudbury police service. One trans advocate from Sudbury recently called these rights the most progressive anywhere in North America.

Speaker, protecting the rights of transgendered inmates is an important step as we transform corrections in Ontario and build even safer communities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last year's throne speech contained at least one accurate statement: that in government "trust is hard-earned, but easily lost." How does the Premier expect the people of Ontario to trust her when she refuses to dismiss a top aide who appears to have broken Ontario's election law in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that is up to the people of Ontario, and it is up to the people of every riding in the province. It's up to the people of Sudbury, for example, to make their decisions.

What I have to do is I have to tell the people of Ontario what I'm doing and when I'm doing it.

On the issue that the member opposite has raised, I've been very clear: Pat Sorbara will continue to fully co-operate with the authorities as the investigation unfolds. If charges are laid, then Pat Sorbara, of course, would step aside. I have said that publicly, Mr. Speaker, and I repeat that, and I reinforce that we will work with the authorities. But that investigation is taking place outside of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Police services boards are responsible for governing and overseeing the delivery of police services. As such, their members should be held to the highest standards of integrity. When Elections Ontario concludes that a provincial appointee to a police services board appears to have broken the law, which is exactly what they wrote in their report, the Premier cannot pretend that this is just another day at the office.

Again, to quote the throne speech, "Trust is hard-earned, but easily lost." Mr. Speaker, how on earth does the Premier of Ontario expect the people of Ontario to trust her when she continues to express confidence in the police services board chair, who appears to have broken Ontario's election law in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's obvious by the number of questions on this issue that members opposite are very concerned and very passionate about integrity in government. What I would like to ask them is, where were they in 2011 when four Harper Conservatives were investigated, charged, pled guilty and were fined for violations of the elections act? None of them—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Leeds–Grenville will desist, the member from Dufferin–Caledon will desist, and the member from Nepean–Carleton will desist.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Complete your answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So my question is, if they are so concerned and so passionate, where were they in 2011?

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier, of course. It's not just the opposition party that's saying the government's behaviour is wrong, Premier; it's also the Toronto Star, the Toronto Sun, the Globe and Mail, the National Post, the Waterloo Record and the Hamilton Spectator.

Earlier this week, the Sudbury Star published an editorial which ran under the headline "Wynne's Actions Shameful During Sudbury Debacle." The Premier seems to think she can ignore the scandal—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: —but she's being called out by voices all over this province. Will she come clean and will she start telling the true story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been taking this seriously from the beginning. I absolutely understand that it is extremely important for me to be very clear in this House and outside of this House with the public. I think to suggest that I'm not taking this seriously is just not accurate. I am absolutely taking it seriously. I've been clear that unlike—the Deputy Premier just went through an example where quite the opposite of what we're doing was taking place under the Harper Conservatives.

I've said that Pat Sorbara will continue to work with the authorities, but if there's a charge laid, then of course she would step aside. That's not what happened in Ottawa, and I've been very clear that that is the action that we're taking. In the meantime, we will work with the authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: The Sudbury Star goes on to say, "One would have expected Wynne to be more contrite, given the bombshell. She should have had the grace to look at least a little penitent."

"Instead, Wynne lashed out...."

The Liberals are on the wrong side of the scandal, and everyone knows it but the Premier. Will the Premier show some contrition and start telling Ontarians the truth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been speaking about this repeatedly. I take this matter very seriously. Let's just be clear: There have been a couple of processes under way. Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. We'll continue to fully co-operate as the Elections Ontario examination moves to the next phase. But the Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

The process has moved to the next stage. We will work with the authorities in that phase of the investigation, but that investigation is happening outside of this Legislature.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know that Ontario is the top jurisdiction in Canada for mineral exploration and I'm very proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of the north and the importance of the mining sector for our province.

As some of us may know, the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada will be holding its highly anticipated 2015 annual convention here in Toronto next week. Can the Minister of Northern Development and Mines please update this House with respect to this annual convention and explain how it is showcasing Ontario's mining sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I thank the member for Davenport for giving me an opportunity to speak about the Prospectors and Developers Association conference, PDAC, which starts this coming Sunday. It's a remarkable convention. There are over 25,000 attendees from over 100 countries, and it's a tremendous opportunity for us, the province of Ontario, to showcase the many successes of the province's mining sector.

1130

We will be kicking off PDAC this coming Sunday evening with our annual Ontario reception. There will be municipal, industry, First Nation and Métis Nation guests coming to that reception. We invite everyone from the Legislature. I'm sure my critics will be there, but we hope all of you attend that event.

What we really want to be able to make clear and encourage as much as possible is to tell the story of Ontario. The province does remain one of the most attractive destinations for mineral exploration investment in Canada and around the world, and we're going to tell our story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his update.

Mr. Speaker, our province's mining sector is impressive. I'm certainly pleased that Ontario is hosting this important international conference, actually the largest conference of its kind in the world. I know that the international delegates who are here will enjoy all that the city of Toronto has to offer.

As we all know, the mining industry is very important not only to northern Ontario but to the entire province. I know that our government continues to engage both corporate and First Nation partners to make sure we are creating the dynamic and innovative business climate that we need for the sector.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government showcasing our support for such an important industry at this convention?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you once again for the question. The fact is that our government is absolutely committed to maintaining a very positive investment climate for mining. I think one of the most clear indicators of investment attractiveness is unquestionably exploration spending. The fact that Ontario remains the Canadian leader and one of the top jurisdictions for mineral exploration expenditures in the world is incredibly important—let alone mineral production topping over \$11 billion last year, let alone the fact that we've got new mines opening up coming up this year and others.

There's lots of work to do, Mr. Speaker, but we have a great and attractive investment climate here in the province of Ontario, and we hope that everybody will be there at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada to help us sell this to investors from all around the world.

ÉLECTION PARTIELLE À SUDBURY

M^{me} Gila Martow: Ma question est adressée à la première ministre. Madame la Première Ministre, comment est-ce possible que quelqu'un qui est le sujet d'une enquête pour des irrégularités peut maintenir l'accès aux données gouvernementales qui se font investiguer?

Pensez-vous vraiment que ceci reflète la qualité de gouvernement que les résidents de l'Ontario méritent?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Je crois que les résidents, les gens, de l'Ontario méritent la vérité, un gouvernement honnête et un gouvernement qui travaille très, très fort pour adresser les «concernes» de l'infrastructure, de l'éducation et de la santé.

Cette investigation ne se passe pas ici—

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ne se passe pas sur le plancher de l'Assemblée législative.

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —sur le plancher de l'Assemblée législative. L'investigation, c'est une investigation—

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Par les autorités.

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —par les autorités. Je veux et je dois travailler avec les autorités, et je fais ça.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Encore à la première ministre : madame la Première Ministre, vous savez très bien que Sorbara peut accéder aux données gouvernementales et qu'elle pourrait être en train de les supprimer en ce moment. Quand allez-vous lui montrer la sortie?

L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: L'investigation ne se passe pas ici dans l'Assemblée législative. L'investigation se passe avec les autorités et je dois travailler avec les autorités.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Premier. The Liberals and the Premier are facing criminal investigation. This is serious, and the response from the Liberals is to talk about the 407, the PanAm Games and GO Transit. Instead of showing leadership, the Premier

has instead reverted to some of the most shameful diversion tactics this Legislature has ever seen. We all thought the performance last Friday was the low point, but yesterday, this self-proclaimed progressive Premier stooped to using missing and murdered aboriginal women as part of a deflection strategy. This is not how a Premier behaves—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Please.

Miss Monique Taylor: This is now how a Premier behaves, and this is not how a government that claims to be progressive behaves.

Will the Premier take the high road, show some leadership and answer the question? Who told Gerry Lougheed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to remind the member from Hamilton Mountain that when I stand, you sit. I think I'll say it again so that she sees that I'm talking to her: When I stand, you sit.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just say a couple of things. First of all, on Friday, I made a statement that was very heartfelt. I made that statement because I believed it was important for the people of Ontario—not just the people in the House, but the people of Ontario—to know exactly where I stood. What I said in that statement is that Pat Sorbara and I will continue to co-operate with the authorities as the investigation unfolds. I said that if charges are laid, then of course Pat Sorbara will step aside, but in the meantime we will continue to work with the authorities.

The member opposite is right: I have said in this House, and I said it as recently as yesterday, that I think there are many, many other important things we need to be talking about—not that this isn't important; it is, and I take it seriously. But issues like the missing and murdered aboriginal women—it's a very important issue. I'm travelling today to Ottawa to take part in a round table tomorrow. It's a very, very serious issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question. The member from Kitchener Centre—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for alerting me. Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, Speaker, the Liberals' non-answer got so over the top that you yourself had to interject. You said, "The tradition of this place is that the question put deserves attention by the answer." These are serious questions that deserve answers, and every time Ontarians get another ridiculous non-answer, the Liberals just show how arrogant they really are.

The Premier has been asked this question 35 times, and she still refuses to answer. Who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their instructions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the direct answer to that question is that there is an investigation taking place. That investigation is not happening in this House. That investigation is happening outside this House.

The member opposite is right. I know she hasn't been here very long, but I will acknowledge that she's right. Yesterday, there were other issues that we wanted to talk about. There are many other issues that are very, very important for a progressive government like ours that is actively working on issues like health care, like education, like the issues facing our aboriginal communities. Those are the reasons I got into government. Those are the issues we are working on to make sure that we continue to support the people of Ontario and their communities and help them to thrive.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Start the clock. Now it's a new question.

NURSES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We have so many people visiting us today at the Legislature who are in the nursing profession, and it's unfortunate that so far today they have not been mentioned. The opposition has had a chance to do that and, sadly, they have not.

Let me ask a question about the people who work in this very important profession. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, we value nurses in hospitals, in clinics and in long-term-care facilities. I would like to ask the minister to please speak to this. Tell us how important our nurses are in our province.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I say this with the greatest respect, but utter astonishment: Neither of the opposition parties asked a single question about our nursing profession. I'm actually going to encourage us all to stand up, recognize and appreciate, acknowledge and celebrate the more than 135,000 nurses who are working hard every single day across this great province.

Applause.

1140

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We'd like to move on, but we can't get answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nipissing, come to order.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, while I'm being heckled on this important issue, I have to say that the people across this province like their doctors—well, perhaps present company excepted right now.

But Ontarians love their nurses. They love their nurses, Mr. Speaker. My own sister, for nearly 40 years, has been a practising RN, proudly serving the people of Haldimand-Norfolk. It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity, with the Premier, in just a few minutes

to spend time with RNAO and their representatives to speak with them in detail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for his very eloquent answer and for the standing ovation we have given nurses in our province.

If you have had the opportunity, Minister, to speak with nurses today, could you please share with us your conversations with them?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to say as well that over the past seven or eight months, eight months that I've been Minister of Health, I've had the pleasure of working responsibly and closely with our nurses, whether they are our RNs, our nurse practitioners or RPNs.

I want to give them credit as well when we were working on the Ebola crisis. Quite frankly, it was the nurses from across this province and across this country, those front-line health workers, who alerted us that more needed to be done, that we needed to do a better job at preparing for the potential of an Ebola case coming to this province. I want to thank them for their advocacy and their hard work to make sure that we provided the best possible care and preparedness that we could.

And it doesn't stop there, with international patients, with refugee health care, social determinants of health—enhancing community care, their report that they issued recently that helps to direct and guide us on important improvements and changes that we need to make in this province.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank them for being here, and I look forward to seeing them promptly.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: The question is back to the Premier. Premier, I've just received a public statement, as of 11 a.m., from the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board's vice-chair of the board.

This week, the police services board held an in-camera meeting. They've retained legal counsel to discuss the findings of the Chief Electoral Officer's report. They resolve to correspond with the Ontario Civilian Police Commission because they're concerned about the situation.

Premier, the people of Sudbury, the men and women of the Sudbury police force and the members of the police services board need your leadership. They need you to have Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara step aside while this investigation is going on.

Please, heed what the police services board is expressing in their concern. Do the right thing. Ask them to step aside.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I have now offered a response to this question God knows how many times. We know that police services boards exist to provide adequate and effective policing within their jurisdictions. Police services boards are composed of both municipal appointments and provincial appointments. They are subject to a code of conduct that is enacted through regulation. If there is a breach, if there is suspicion of a breach around that code of conduct, the responsibility to make a determination rests with the Ontario Civilian Police Commission.

Speaker, you may ask why with the Ontario Civilian Police Commission? Because that's an arm's-length agency that has no engagement with the government. That's why we should let the OCPC do their job and be able to see if they feel they need to review—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: Minister, you know what this board does. You know why the police services board retained legal counsel and made this decision. They are obviously as concerned as we are with this issue. They made the decision without the chair involved in their decision. It's right here in black and white. You're the minister; you've got the authority under the act to also ask the civilian commission to look into this. Do your job.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned earlier, I think we should let the independent agencies do their work as stipulated within the legislation. Under section 25 of the Police Services Act, the OCPC has the authority to look into the matter, and I will leave it up to them.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, if I may, I would like to introduce Claudia Mariano and all the nurses from the West Durham Family Health Team in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. They do a fantastic job each and every day, and I thank them.

CLOSED CAPTIONING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order: It's come to my attention on behalf of one of my constituents that we no longer offer closed captioning for our proceedings in the assembly, particularly during question period. I'd like to raise that as a point to yourself, as well as to the members of the Board of Internal Economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'll take that under advisement and return to the member.

VISITEURS

VISITORS

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Monsieur le Président, it's a point of order.

Il me fait grand plaisir de présenter à la Chambre M. Denis Vaillancourt, qui est ici aujourd'hui pour venir nous parler au caucus de la francophonie. Donc, un grand merci à M. Vaillancourt pour tout son travail à l'association francophone de l'Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce one of the giants of the Canadian mining industry, a member of the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame, a true legend in mining in Canada. Mr. Bill James is here with us today.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: A very quick point of order: I want to introduce my very dear, sweet, supportive sister, Susan Houghton, who arrived late for question period, but there she is.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Point of order: I would like to introduce Hugh Moran from the Ontario Petroleum Institute and a London West constituent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to remind all the members in the House that, knowing that all three House leaders know that we have a deferred vote, I'm going to ask that we cut back on these points of order because even moving into the next phase is actually part of the vote. So it would be very helpful if we held off on any of these, except if they are points of order that deserve attention immediately; I would ask that.

CLOSED CAPTIONING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Saying such, I looked into it and we do continue to provide the service.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion that the question now be put on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister, I'd like to get through this.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1154.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I had one that used to say, "What do I do with it?"

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't tempt me.

On February 17, Ms. Hunter moved second reading of Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Mr. Naqvi has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Naqvi's motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMahon, Eleanor
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.

Miller, Paul
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Orazietti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadi, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Sergio, Charles
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhari, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Hunter has moved second reading of Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection: Same vote?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before we do that, I was asked if we have the same vote. Same vote? I heard noes.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bell rang from 1158 to 1159.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Hunter has moved second reading of Bill 56. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMahon, Eleanor
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.

Miller, Paul
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Orazietti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadi, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhari, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thibeault, Glenn
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Martow, Gila
McDonnell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

CLOSED CAPTIONING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Earlier, I had mentioned that we didn't have closed captioning. Apparently, it is on the

television. That said, it is not in the live House webcast online. My constituent has just contacted me again to ensure that we do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order. It's not in the House business, so I'll get back to the member.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: I have a number of names to read off, all members of the Ontario Real Estate Association here in support of a bill that I'll be introducing a little bit later on in the proceedings. So please bear with me and I beg your indulgence: Costa Pouloupoulos, Tom Lebour, Karen Cox, Brian Graham, Sean Morrison, Johnmark Roberts, Lisa Wale, Ettore Cardarelli, Tim Barber and Ray Ferris.

OREA staff members: Matthew Thornton, Sylvia Pena and Adam Yahn.

From Durham region: Roger Bouma, Nancy Shaw, Cathie Ketcheson and Sandra O'Donohue.

From Oakville: Von Jeppesen and Jack McCrudden.

From the Toronto Real Estate Board: Filippo Sbrocchi, Andrew Wells, Chris Allen, Tina Sibbald, Kevin Crigger, Cynthia Lee and Katie Young.

From the Mississauga Real Estate Board: Allan Todd, Nigel Purai and Donna Metcalfe.

From the Brampton Real Estate Board: Denise Dilbey, Bernadine Bowen, Joselle and Rui Alves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We welcome all our guests who are in the east members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They're watching you.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to introduce Kristy May. She's a wonderful intern with the Ontario Legislative Internship Program, and today is her last day. We're going to miss her greatly.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome to the gallery Catherine Bell-Sood of Kingston and the Islands; Raman Sood, Kingston and the Islands; Dev Sood, president of the South Asian seniors association in Etobicoke; Manohar Lal Verma, Etobicoke; Balbir Singh Bedi, Brampton; Madan Lal Mahey, Brampton—excuse my pronunciation—Ranjit Mohindra, Whitby; Clary Klieb, Toronto; and Jack Klieb, Toronto. Welcome.

They're here to hear a petition on pharmacare.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PETER REMILLARD

Mr. Jim McDonell: This past Tuesday morning, my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry tragically lost an outstanding citizen. Peter Remillard was a very respected lawyer in Morrisburg and Chesterville, known throughout the business and farming community. He was

called to the Ontario bar in 1979 and to the Quebec bar in 1981. He joined the local Gorrell and Grenkie law firm in 1983.

Peter left his mark on this community for his years of service. He presided over the Morrisburg and District Chamber of Commerce, the Dundas district cancer society, the Morrisburg Business Improvement Area, and was a director of the Winchester and District Hospital Foundation and the Upper Canada Playhouse. He was also active in martial arts, on the parent council for schools and recreation, and on local law associations. Peter also gave law lectures for farmers at conferences for the Ministry of Agriculture.

His friend and legal partner Doug Grenkie said of him, "Peter was a brilliant lawyer, [who] worked hard for the people and gave wise advice to all. He never said no to anyone. Peter was a strong worker in the community and he enjoyed family."

Peter's love of life, family, people, law and hard work is an inspiration, and he will be missed by all. On behalf of the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, I wish to offer our heartfelt condolences to his wife Patricia, son Liam, brother Richard, sister Kathleen and parents Romeo and Margaret.

VYRN PETERSON

Mr. Michael Mantha: With municipal leaders returning home and OGRA/ROMA coming to an end this week, it was obvious someone was missing. Vyrn Peterson dedicated many years of his life to serving the community of Blind River. Vyrn entered into politics in 1978 and kept his seat until his recent passing, serving as mayor and councillor.

Vyrn worked on every single committee and probably created a few. Vyrn did politics differently. Don't get me wrong, he always brought his A game, but when the election was done, it was done, and up went his sleeves, and he immediately went to work for his constituents, always keeping in mind and at heart his love for the community of Blind River.

Vyrn lived life to the fullest. His final request was that he wanted a celebration of life with laughter and music. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley were blasting at his celebration of life at the Blind River Legion yesterday.

Even during the hectic days on the campaign trails, he found time to have coffee with his competition, Mayor Sue Jensen.

Many community leaders across Algoma-Manitoulin, the province, even internationally, came to pay their respects to Vyrn. Organizations, such as his love for the Lions Club—where just two weeks ago he held court, sharing ideas and views on their projects.

The legionnaires were also there, saying their farewells to their comrade, stating, "We will remember him."

The Mason Men all came out to bid Vyrn adieu and safe journey to the higher kingdom. Many, many friends; so much respect shown for Vyrn.

Vyrn left many gifts; some of them were obvious in the strength and courage his granddaughter Tracey displayed when she shared a personal story on how her "Poppa" was her rock.

Vyrn was innovative, creative and had an amazing sense of humour, as his younger brother pointed out: how a simple can of pork and beans can be turned into a wonderful dish of fèves au lard.

The engine behind Vyrn was his love of his family. His loving wife, Betty, was always by his side in life as in family business. His love for his grandchildren was never in doubt; to the kids, he was known as "Poppa."

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Vyrn, the ever so community minded person, was hoping to attend FONOM to accept his 35-year service pin. However, the powers that be needed him at His boardroom for community work.

To the Peterson family, I spoke to FONOM yesterday, and they would be honoured to present his 35-year pin to the family.

Congratulations, Vyrn. Rest in peace. Meeting adjourned.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: As we near the end of February, I'm pleased to rise today to share some of the great experiences I've had in celebrating Black History Month. There have been countless events and celebrations taking place throughout the province. I've been fortunate to attend a number of them in my Halton riding.

On February 5, I was invited by the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton to attend a Black History Month kickoff celebration at Oakville town hall. In addition to the creative exhibits put on by the Oakville Museum, Sheridan College and the Association of African-Canadian Artists, attendees were treated to some incredible musical performances by Beyond Sound and the jazz duo Diana Braithwaite and Chris Whiteley.

Then on February 9 I visited a local school to watch an inspiring and thought-provoking documentary, *The Last White Knight*. Directed by Canadian Paul Saltzman, it was a remarkable tale of reconciliation and civil rights history, inspired by actual events during the early 1960s.

Just this past Tuesday, I joined the Premier, fellow caucus members and a number of special guests for a memorable reception right here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Speaker, events like these are a valuable reminder of the vital role that diversity, acceptance and justice play in our province's strength and prosperity. It's important for us all to reflect on the history of Ontario's black community; to acknowledge the struggles and hardships endured by so many. Holding month-long celebrations helps us to remain mindful of our difficult past and to appreciate past and present contributions.

LAKE HURON CENTRE FOR COASTAL CONSERVATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today it's my pleasure to show support for the work that the Lake Huron Centre

for Coastal Conservation is doing in my riding of Huron-Bruce and neighbouring ridings as well.

The Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation's goal is to protect and restore Lake Huron's coastal environment and to promote a healthy coastal ecosystem.

Interjection: Does that mean windmills?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It means no windmills.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Karen Alexander from the centre just last week, where she informed me of the excellent work their group is doing in regard to the invasive species phragmites.

Invasive phragmites is a serious threat to coastal systems because the dense monoculture stands severely disrupt natural coastal processes. The coastal centre has been working with municipalities to help control phragmites on the shoreline since the early 2000s. However, this year, more than ever, with water levels likely rising, they'll also be lacking the proper tools to control this plant come the fall of 2015.

Invasive phragmites is an aggressive plant that spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients. It releases toxins from its roots into the soil to hinder the growth of and kill surrounding plants.

I want to do everything I can to help support centres like this that are working hard to support our lakes and coastal systems. This centre, in particular, stands out to me because not only do they want what's best for Lake Huron—in fact, all of the Great Lakes—but they also recognize the economic and social dimensions of sustainability.

1310

STEVE REVINGTON

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my great honour to rise today to recognize Steve Revington, an extraordinary teacher from my riding of London West who was recently named among the top 50 finalists for the Global Teacher Prize. This is public education's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, and Steve was one of only three Canadians selected from over 5,000 nominations from 137 countries.

The prize recognizes an exceptional teacher who has gone beyond the classroom to make an outstanding contribution to student learning and to the profession. This is exactly what Steve has done as a much-loved teacher at Emily Carr Public School and a respected mentor to his colleagues. Steve's focus is on authentic learning, a style of learning that encourages students to create meaningful, useful products to be shared with the world. Authentic learning draws on brain research that says the closer learning is to real-life scenarios, the more motivated and engaged students become.

According to his students, authentic learning works. One student says, "Last year, my partner and I had to design a capsule that could protect an egg from a two-storey drop. I learned science, math, English etc. from the experience, and the way I learned these things is unforgettable. I can still envision my capsule dropping. I learned more in that unit than I did in all of grade 4."

My heartfelt congratulations to Steve on his outstanding achievement and sincere thanks for the difference he is making for students.

YOUTH HAVEN BARRIE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: On Saturday, February 21, Canadians from 65 communities across Canada participated in the Coldest Night of the Year, including the MPP from Newmarket–Aurora.

This walk provides participants with the opportunity to experience a hint of the challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness while raising revenue for important local charities. In Barrie, participants walked in support of the local shelter, Youth Haven.

And 2015 is a special year for Youth Haven, as they are celebrating their 25th year of incorporation and working to change the landscape of service provision for youth in need. Youth Haven has expanded its programming in this last year to include transitional housing in addition to the emergency services they have always provided.

Youth Haven also has 20 emergency beds available to any youth between the ages of 16 and 24 and now has five transitional beds where youth can stay for up to a year, have a lock on the door, develop deeper life skills and goals and experience semi-independent living in a supportive environment.

Youth Haven also offers case management, which helps participants expand their awareness of strengths, goals and barriers. The case manager works in tandem with a life skills coordinator, counsellors and community partners to provide wraparound care to the youth.

I thank this local organization for raising over \$25,000 for this great organization. Congratulations.

RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS DAY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, 94.1 myFM's and Coad Plumbing, Heating and Air's Random Act of Kindness Day took place Wednesday, February 4, in St. Thomas and Elgin county. It was there to build on the vision that St. Thomas and Elgin county are building a better community but also to encourage the "pay it forward" philosophy.

Random Act of Kindness Day is an opportunity for individuals, schools, communities, service clubs, businesses, health care institutions and churches to perform small, simple, kind deeds; experience a unique grassroots initiative designed around doing nice things for nice people.

Last year, Random Act of Kindness Day caused a ripple effect across the county. We never imagined the tremendous response we would receive to this initiative in our community. The true impact of the Random Act of Kindness initiative may never fully be revealed. In St. Thomas and Elgin alone, myFM distributed over 5,000 cards, and if only a fraction of that was paid forward, Speaker, it was well worth it.

The real reason the concept has caught attention is that it reminds everyone of our greatest natural resource in St. Thomas and Elgin county, and that's the people.

On February 4, we met at Memorial Arena for a chili lunch. The chili lunch was provided by Kathy's Catering, and it was delicious. I want to thank Williams Funeral Home for also sponsoring the event. But we really want to be proud of Coad's heating and air conditioning, which gave out a free furnace for someone in need for the day, and also myFM for being such a strong promoter of our community.

EVENTS IN BEACHES–EAST YORK

Mr. Arthur Potts: While visitors regularly visit and flock to the Beach during the spring, summer and autumn seasons, it's not usually top of mind during the winter months, and especially not this year. But community builders are helping to make the Beach a year-round destination with events such as DeClute's Light up the Beach and now the Winter Stations project.

On Family Day of this year, five drab-looking lifeguard stations between Kew Gardens and the Balmy Beach Club were transformed into vibrant pieces of art. Local resident Ted Merrick from Ferris and Associates had a vision to bring life to the Beach in winter. To make this happen, he reached out to his friend Roland Colthoff from RAW Design. He had input from art consultant Justin Ridgeway and sought the advice and assistance of local councillor Mary-Margaret McMahon.

Five submissions were picked out of more than 200 entries from around the world to dress up these five lifeguard stations on the beach. Sling Swing by Ed Butler, Dan Wiltshire and Frances McGeown evokes a canvas beach chair that you can sit in to give the feet a rest, and Driftwood Throne by Daniel Madeiros is a 15-foot-high structure made from reclaimed lumber. Snow Cone by Ryerson students Lily Jeon and Diana Koncan mimics an igloo and pine cone with touches of colour, and Hot Box looks foreboding but offers a cozy refuge from the winter chill. Also, designed by Timothy Olson was Wing Back. Wing Back has a concave shape which faces the southwest and corrals heat from the sun.

The winter stations will stay up until March 20, and I encourage you all to come down to the Beach and visit these imaginative structures. Thank you to the organizers, the contest winners and all of the artists who submitted their ideas. We look forward to supporting this as an annual tradition.

SOINS CONTINUS BRUYÈRE CONTINUING CARE

M. John Fraser: Je suis heureux d'intervenir aujourd'hui pour reconnaître le 170^e anniversaire de l'arrivée de Mère Élisabeth Bruyère à Ottawa.

I was pleased last Friday to join my colleagues the Attorney General and the government House leader at the celebration of the 170th anniversary of Mother Bruyère

coming to Ottawa. In her efforts to establish a school, a hospital, an orphanage and a home for the elderly, she laid the very foundation for the Bruyère Continuing Care that exists today.

Bruyère is now one of the largest health care institutions of its kind in Canada and has evolved into a complex continuing care network that includes Élisabeth Bruyère and St-Vincent hospitals, two family medical centres, multiple residences, a foundation and a research institute which works heavily in the fields of primary and palliative care. For generations, Bruyère has been providing compassionate, quality care with their ongoing commitment to advancing teaching, education and research.

Ils répondent aux besoins de la communauté diversifiée d'Ottawa, et de travailler ensemble avec les patients, les résidents et les familles à promouvoir un environnement bienveillant et favorable dans les deux langues officielles.

Congratulations to the staff and the volunteers at Bruyère Continuing Care. Most of all, thank you for caring for the people who we care for most.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX FAIRNESS

FOR REALTORS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ FISCALE

POUR LES COURTIERS

EN VALEURS IMMOBILIÈRES

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 with respect to personal real estate corporations / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier relativement aux sociétés personnelles immobilières.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carry.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

1320

Mr. Todd Smith: Again, it's called the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, 2015. I'd like to welcome all the members from the Ontario Real Estate Association, who have been waiting a long time for this.

The bill amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act to permit a personal real estate corporation to be registered as a broker or salesperson. A personal real estate corporation must be incorporated as a professional corporation under the Business Corporations Act and be authorized only to trade in real estate.

In addition, the bill amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act to permit a brokerage to pay a

commission or other remuneration to the personal real estate corporation of an individual broker or salesperson that it employs.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just before I get into my formal statement, I just want to thank all the First Nations, cottagers, municipalities, businesses, farmers, conservation authorities, water source protection groups, and environmental and community groups who were involved in drafting the proposals in this proposed legislation.

Last week, I had the privilege of introducing the proposed new Great Lakes Protection Act. The Great Lakes are vital to the health of Ontario's environment, to our economy and, of course, to our people. These beautiful lakes are unparalleled, holding one fifth of all the fresh water on earth. At a time when we are seeing this valuable resource under threat in other places around the world, our water wealth gives Ontario a significant competitive advantage.

However, there can be no doubt that the Great Lakes are also under stress. We are seeing increasing water quality problems, such as the harmful algae bloom in Lake Erie last summer. Invasive species threaten to undermine valuable fisheries and the quality of coastal waters and beaches. Land use pressures are degrading critical habitats such as coastal wetlands, and climate change is bringing the risk of significant changes to water levels, along with record storms and flooding that wash pollution into our lakes. Most significantly, many scientists now agree that the Great Lakes are actually at a tipping point of irreversible change if action is not taken now to restore ecosystem health.

Taking action is exactly what our proposed Great Lakes Protection Act sets out to do. The proposed Great Lakes Protection Act is designed to protect and restore our Great Lakes so they are drinkable, fishable and swimmable. If passed, it would give the province new tools to work with partners to protect and restore these important resources by ensuring action against the complex and increasing number of threats to the lakes, waters and shorelines.

The proposed act would establish a Great Lakes guardians' council to bring together municipal representation; representatives of First Nations and Métis communities; representatives from farming, tourism, industry, science and environmental communities; conservation authorities; and others with a stake in protecting the Great Lakes. The council would be a forum to identify Great Lakes improvement priorities, share information and help focus resources on addressing those priorities together.

The proposed act, if passed, authorizes the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to set targets to

address particular Great Lakes problems. For example, it would require at least one target for reducing algae blooms to be established within two years of the act coming into force.

The proposed act recognizes the importance of science in assessing the impact of stressors on the Great Lakes, identifying solutions and the need to continually assess our progress, adapt our actions and chart the way forward. The proposed act would ensure the establishment and maintenance of monitoring and reporting programs to improve understanding and management of the Great Lakes. It would increase reporting transparency and accountability by requiring that regular progress reports be tabled every three years in this Legislature; they would include reporting on performance measures and targets. It would also require that we consider traditional ecological knowledge that is offered by First Nations and Métis people as part of the decision-making process.

The proposed act, if passed, would enshrine Ontario's Great Lakes strategy in law as a living document to be reviewed every six years, and its progress reported on publicly every three years.

Many partners, as I mentioned before, were involved in drafting this. This is truly the work of the people of the Great Lakes.

This is the third time such a bill has been before this House. In developing the proposed strengthened Great Lakes Protection Act, we listened to the people of Ontario and the feedback we received from the opposition parties.

The people of this province understand that we need to protect and restore this immensely valuable resource.

I hope all members take pride in their contributions to this proposed legislation and will support the steps necessary to bring this bill forward. I look forward to working with all members of this House on this proposed bill as we move it through the legislative process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? The minister of northern affairs and mines.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the continued growth of the mineral development sector in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, for over 130 years, northern Ontario has been intimately involved in the building of our province and country through the production of our natural resources. Whether it was driving North America's industrialization in the 20th century, welcoming new Canadians into our northern communities or expanding international trade, resource development has been a major part of the fabric of our province and our nation. I'm pleased to say that despite commodity and investment challenges that we're facing globally, Ontario's mining sector remains strong and competitive.

Innovation has been key to the success of mineral development in our province, Mr. Speaker. You'll be pleased to know, as I think all members of the House

will, that right here in Ontario, we are responsible for close to one quarter of Canada's total mineral production. In addition, Ontario is one of the world's top 10 jurisdictions for mineral investments and has been for many years.

There is no better place to celebrate and to promote Ontario's success in mineral development than at the annual Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention. Next week, on Monday, in fact, I will have the honour of officially opening the Ontario pavilion at this convention, which is attended by well over 25,000 delegates from more than 100 countries. I'm looking forward to sharing the story of the continued success of Ontario's mineral development sector with delegates from all around the world.

The bottom line is that when it comes to mining, the province of Ontario gets it right. Since 2003, the value of mineral production has risen from \$5.7 billion, a pretty impressive figure, up to \$11 billion in 2014—not bad. That makes Ontario the leading province in mineral production every year for the last decade. In fact, Ontario is the number one producer in Canada for an array of metals and minerals, including nickel, copper and platinum, among others.

Delegates at this convention are going to be learning about the significant impact the mineral development industry has had on the people of Ontario. For many, many people in our province, mining has quite literally transformed the way that they live.

There are approximately 900 mining supply and service companies that support the mining industry in our province. Together they directly employ 41,000 people and have an estimated direct economic impact of \$6.6 billion. That's the mining supply and service sector.

It's also an important fact to note—those who understand industry understand as well—that more global mining projects get financed in Toronto than in any other financial centre in the world. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the global leader in both mining equity capital raised and the number of mining companies listed on the exchange. It's pretty impressive. We currently have approximately 1,500 mining companies listed, \$240 billion in mining market capitalization and \$6.9 billion in new mining equity.

Speaker, there is no question that our province is a global mining force. The success of our industry is due to our commitment to drive innovation and collaboration in the mineral development sector—absolutely both key elements. It is this drive and determination that, may I say, is leading the development of the Ring of Fire.

The chromite deposit in the Ring of Fire is a momentous discovery, one of the largest known chromite deposits in the world, and it has a mineral potential that we believe to be worth more than \$60 billion.

1330

Last year, our government took a number of major and important steps to lay the groundwork for the development of this project, including the commitment of \$1 billion for strategic transportation infrastructure in the

region, a very remote part of the province, and establishing the Ring of Fire Infrastructure Development Corp. We've also very strongly strengthened our partnership with the First Nations through the signing of a historical framework agreement with the Matawa member First Nations.

We are very proud of these accomplishments and are continuing to work very closely with all interested parties on the opportunities for the development of the Ring of Fire.

Overall, we are so committed to sustaining a healthy mineral development sector. We're committed by supporting competitive regulatory and taxation policies and ensuring that our approach to mineral development balances the interests of all parties. That's always a real key to find that balance. This certainly includes respecting aboriginal and treaty rights, private landowners, public health, safety and the environment.

So next week, when the investors at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada convention, or PDAC, want to think of a secure, safe and successful jurisdiction to stake a claim, we want them to think of Ontario, because there is simply no better place to invest than right here in Ontario. We have the resources, we have the talent, and we have the passion.

To ensure that we build on this momentum, our government is working very hard. We're working on renewing Ontario's mineral development strategy. In the very near term—I think that means really soon—I will be sharing Ontario's plan to update the province's mineral development strategy, which will set out priorities to strengthen the sector and cement Ontario's position as a leading mining jurisdiction. With more than 30 advanced mineral exploration projects under way, it is truly an exciting time to be involved in mineral exploration and development in Ontario.

Next week I will speak with investors about Ontario's mineral development legacy and our future with some real pride. I invite all members to join me in speaking proudly about our mineral development industry in the province of Ontario and share our province's mining success stories. See you all at PDAC. Thank you very much—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. In the House, it is very appropriate to correct one's record and even I am not immune from that. I believe I introduced the minister as the minister responsible for northern affairs. I don't think he has to do all of that. It's the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—no affairs for you, Minister.

Statements by ministries?

It's now time for responses.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: As PC critic for environment and climate change, I'm honoured to stand before you today to respond to Bill 66, because growing up and now living a short distance from the shores of Lake

Huron, I recognize the importance of our Great Lakes and how crucial it is that we ensure their health, both now and in the future.

Ontario's west coast, Lake Huron, is a shared treasure in my riding. From the shoreline communities to across the countryside, it is a source of pride, with some of the best sunsets in the world. The Great Lakes are a mode of transportation as well. For instance, the Goderich harbour routinely sees commodities such as grains, oilseeds and minerals loaded onto lakers destined for locations beyond the sunset.

It is also a source of recreation and tourism and an economic driver in my riding. Here you can relax in the sun along the shorelines and take a hike along the trails, enjoy fishing or bird watching, or get active with cycling and canoeing.

I thank the municipalities, the communities and organizations who are already committed to being stewards of all of our Great Lakes.

On behalf of the riding of Huron–Bruce in particular, I would like to share with you that I also share in the minister's passion for ensuring we have a proactive approach to protecting our Great Lakes. However, in reviewing Bill 66, I must raise to the House my reservations and concerns surrounding this bill and if it can deliver on its promises.

First, the proposed guardians' council claims to be an open forum for participation and discussion, but when the minister is hand-picking who is invited to these meetings, it doesn't seem very open to me.

Further, I have serious questions surrounding the absence of funding to implement initiatives. After speaking with ministerial staff in a technical briefing, they were unable to indicate where money for initiatives would come from. I fear that these costs will be downloaded onto already overburdened municipalities.

Lastly, one of my biggest concerns is the amount of power afforded to initiatives yet to be determined by the minister's hand-picked council and their ability to override existing legislation. This has the potential for further erosion of municipal autonomy, just like we saw in the Green Energy Act.

Speaker, I have to tell you: To protect the Great Lakes, I share with the minister that we need to support local conservation efforts, promote environmental stewardship across all industries, and enable local municipalities to make smart planning decisions in their own communities.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: It is my pleasure to rise and respond to the comments by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and leader Jim Wilson.

I could be a little critical of some of his comments, especially the lack of progress on the Ring of Fire or our current ranking in terms of where Ontario is as to where it used to be. I do remember that it used to be number one. We're somewhere further down these days in the

various ranking systems. But I'm going to remain positive today, with PDAC happening.

The mineral exploration and development industry is a key contributor to the economy of our country and particularly here in Ontario. The industry is part of our national identity. The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada make Toronto a worldwide destination for the industry during the first week of March every year. I'd like to congratulate them this year on the 83rd year of the convention.

The sheer number of people who attend annually is astounding, with over 25,000 individuals at the show in each of the past four years. Last year, I was particularly pleased that the Prime Minister was able to attend—the first Prime Minister ever to do so. I look forward to the opening speech by Finance Minister Joe Oliver this Sunday.

Annually, the convention adds millions of dollars to the Toronto economy—just ask those who conduct early exploration mine development—and it adds billions of dollars to the Canadian economy. The conference is as popular as ever—just ask anyone who has tried to book a downtown hotel during the days when PDAC is on.

We have a great mineral potential in the province of Ontario. I encourage the government to work to reduce the red tape in the prospecting and permitting process in Ontario so that we can realize that potential.

I look forward to the convention and to the continued commitment to supporting prospectors and developers in our great province. Again, please accept my congratulations, and all the best for another great convention in 2015.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No one questions the need to protect the Great Lakes and the watersheds that flow into the lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. After all, Ontario borders on four of the five Great Lakes; 75% of the people in Ontario get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

One thing that desperately needs to be changed, though, is legislation that allows companies to take our water for next to nothing and then sell it. Since 1961, companies taking more than 50,000 litres of water a day needed a permit. The government collects \$200,000 in annual permit fees, but it costs \$9.5 million a year to monitor and enforce this activity, and that should change. Water-bottling companies—indeed all 6,000 permit holders who do this—have to start paying their fair share, and it's only right. Seven years ago, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario was calling on the government to change this; the Drummond report also calls for that to change.

We also need to do more to reduce phosphorus levels in the Great Lakes. Phosphorus, nitrogen, manure—they all lead to algae blooms and threats to our watersheds. We need to pay more attention to radioactive materials

and to plans to bury this material on the shores of Lake Huron. We need to monitor any plans to ship radioactive material along the Great Lakes. We need to have a full environmental assessment before we even consider allowing oil from the Alberta tar sands to be pumped through aging pipelines near our Great Lakes. We need new shutoff valves on both sides of any lake, creek, brook or stream that pipelines would cross.

1340

Our Great Lakes are under constant threat. Purple loosestrife, zebra mussels, phragmites, Asian carp—there's a never-ending cavalcade of threats to our Great Lakes. These are threats to our drinking water, our commercial interests, our tourism, our economy and even our property values. We must do more to protect the watersheds and shoreline green spaces that are home to 4,000 species of plants, fish and wildlife.

In my area, in Windsor–Tecumseh, we promote the 100 Mile Peninsula as a retirement community. We're nearly surrounded by water, with affordable homes, marinas and waterside golf courses.

I'll remind the minister that in 2012 the Liberals said they would put \$52 million into the budget to protect and restore the Great Lakes. It didn't happen. They talked about it but didn't come through with the money.

We need, as Elvis used to say, “a little less conversation and a little more action,” or that famous Cuba Gooding Jr. line from that movie about sports agents with Tom Cruise, “Show me the money.”

It's a real issue, Speaker. We will work with the government to improve this bill, and we look forward to the opportunity to do so.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: As critic for northern development and mines for the NDP, I am pleased to rise and offer my comments. I won't be as positive as everybody else has been.

I would like to welcome the many mining industry people, companies and international government delegations who have come to Toronto to participate in the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada international mining conference, which starts this weekend.

Each year, these companies and government delegations from around the world come to Toronto to network, discuss issues, challenges, world trends and, hopefully, establish working relationships.

As mining is one of our economy's important engines, the province needs to pay more attention to the needs of the industry. Mining has created tens of thousands of jobs across the province, and there is an opportunity to do so much more. But in order for mining companies to come and invest in Ontario, they need to see that government has a clear, concrete plan for mining in this province.

PDAC is the stage which sets the tone for interest and investment in this province. This week in the NetNews-Ledger, the first page that comes out is, “Ontario Ranked

23rd in Mining Attractiveness,” and again, yes, I’m quoting the Fraser Institute. The article reads:

“The most attractive jurisdiction in the world for mining investment this year is Finland. The other top 10 ranked jurisdictions are Saskatchewan, Nevada, Manitoba, Western Australia, Quebec, Wyoming, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon and Alaska. Ontario was ranked 23rd, one spot above Alberta....”

At one time in 2013, we were 14th. In 2012, we were actually ninth. So in just three years, we have dropped 14 spots. We have gone from being in the top 10 most attractive places to 23rd. This is not a good-news story for the province, heading into PDAC.

The Ring of Fire offers First Nations, the north and the province huge economic opportunities and much-needed jobs.

As mining critic, I will continue to push this government to take action. It’s so obvious that we need a plan; we need a framework. Mining companies, First Nations, northern communities and citizens of this province want to see this project moving forward so that everyone can reap the economic benefits.

Again, I want to welcome PDAC delegates to Ontario, and I look forward to meeting with all of you next week.

PETITIONS

REALTORS

Mr. Todd Smith: This is a petition signed by real estate folks right across the province, from London to the GTA to Kingston. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario real estate salespeople are prevented by the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 from incorporating their businesses through a personal real estate corporation; and

“Whereas other regulated professions, including chartered accountants, lawyers, health professionals, social workers, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, architects and engineers, can all form personal corporations; and

“Whereas permitting real estate salespeople to incorporate would create jobs and increase government revenue;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, 2015 and give real estate professionals in Ontario the ability to form personal real estate corporations.”

I agree with this petition and I will pass it to the table with page William.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to present this petition that comes from, basically, Sudbury and Nickel

Belt. It reads as follows—and some of you have heard it before:

“Whereas the Ontario government has made” PET scanning “a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly “to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

Those 200 people are added to the 28,000 people who have signed this petition, and it will be carried by Arlyne to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

“Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

“Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:”

That the Ontario government “immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with this petition, I sign it and leave it with page Fardin.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition from the Huntsville area for improved winter roads maintenance. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

Mr. Speaker, I support this petition and will sign the petition.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

"Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the following actions:

"(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

"(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

"(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page William to take to the table.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It is a great pleasure to stand and support this petition alongside my colleague from Kingston and the Islands.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas:

"—some 3.1 million Ontarians have inadequate drug coverage or no drug coverage at all;

"—each year some 3,800 Ontarians die from prescription drugs taken exactly as prescribed and an additional 57,000 Ontarians experience serious unwanted side reactions; and

"—almost one fifth of new substances approved by Health Canada between 1995 and 2010 were later given serious safety warnings;

1350

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Urge the Minister of Health to include a universal pharmacare drug plan with first-dollar coverage in the Ontario Health Insurance Act;

"Make mandatory the reporting of the adverse effect of prescription drugs. We request that an independent drug monitoring agency be established with the power to remove unsafe drugs and issue actionable instructions to reduce the number of deaths by prescription drugs. We also request that such an agency be mandated to review on a 180-day priority basis all new prescription drugs, and

"Allow only evidence-based cost-effective drugs to be included on the list of plan-acceptable prescription drugs."

It gives me great pleasure to sign it and give it to page Inaya.

TRESPASSING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas when private property is damaged it is left to property owners to repair these damages, and the costs can quickly add up to thousands of dollars. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has asked for a minimum fine for trespassing and an increase on the maximum limit on compensation for damages;

"Whereas Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, will amend the current Trespass to Property Act by creating a minimum fine of \$500 for trespassing and increasing the maximum compensation for damages to \$25,000; and

"Whereas the Respecting Private Property Act will allow property owners to be fairly compensated for destruction to their property, and will also send a message that trespassing is a serious issue by creating a minimum fine;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To support Sylvia Jones's private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, and schedule public hearings so that Bill 36 can be passed without further delay."

For obvious reasons, I support this petition, and I give it to page Vaughn to return to the table.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has agreed to grant Enbridge a rate increase of 40% on natural gas;

"Whereas consumer groups have requested special sessions to examine Enbridge's application and the Ontario Energy Board denied the request;

"Whereas consumer bills will, on average, increase \$400—putting annual natural gas bills at \$1,400, up from \$1,000;

"Whereas families in the Niagara region cannot afford to pay the extra 40% on their natural gas bills;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Ministry of Energy issue a directive to the Ontario Energy Board to grant special sessions to review Enbridge's application to increase natural gas prices by 40%."

I support this petition, affix my signature, and will give it to page Arlyne.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I agree with this petition, I am going to sign it, and I will be handing it over to page Victoria.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas current provisions of the Child and Family Services Act prevent a children's aid society from arranging temporary care for 16- and 17-year-olds who seek their assistance and have not been previously in care; and

"Whereas the inability to arrange care in a stable and nurturing family can expose youth to the risk of homelessness, criminality, poor education outcomes, and deteriorating physical and mental health; and

"Whereas at-risk 16- and 17-year-olds without care can impose a greater cost on social service providers than the cost of arranging for two years of temporary care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has repeatedly asked for 16- and 17-year-old youths to be able to seek CAS assistance regarding temporary care; and

"Whereas Bill 88 won all-party support during the 40th Parliament and was reported back to the House for third reading by the Standing Committee on Social Policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To pass Bill 54, the Right to Care Act, by giving it second and third reading on March 5, 2015."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it to page Madison.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Windsor-Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

"Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and

"Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

"Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector."

I fully agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Niko to take up to the Clerk.

REALTORS

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario real estate salespeople are prevented by the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 from incorporating their businesses through a personal real estate corporation; and

"Whereas other regulated professions, including chartered accountants, lawyers, health professionals, social workers, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, architects and engineers, can all form personal corporations; and

"Whereas permitting real estate salespeople to incorporate would create jobs and increase government revenue;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, 2015 and give real estate professionals in Ontario the ability to form personal real estate corporations."

I affix my signature and hand it to page Eileen.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Arthur Wilkie, from the beautiful community of Westree in my riding of Nickel Belt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP MPP for Timiskaming-Cochrane, John Vanthof, has introduced Bill 46 in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario so that UTVs (utility task vehicles) would be treated like all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) by the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act" passed second reading on February 19; and

"Whereas this bill will have positive economic impacts on clubs, manufacturers, dealers and rental shops and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity," like Westree;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To vote in favour of MPP Vanthof's Bill 46 to allow UTVs the same access as ATVs in the Highway Traffic Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Arlyne to bring it to the Clerk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AMENDMENT ACT (VOTING HOURS EXTENSION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES (PROLONGATION DES HEURES DE SCRUTIN)

Mr. Berardinetti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 68, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m. / *Projet de loi 68, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les élections municipales pour que les bureaux de vote restent ouverts jusqu'à 21 h.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Berardinetti has moved second reading of Bill 68, An Act

to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

1400

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off by dedicating this bill, Bill 68, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m., to young people, to students, people in school, and the pages here today. It's important that they understand what's involved in the voting process and how democracy works. I think it's very important that we debate that today.

These days, there are all kinds of distractions: social media, Google, Facebook, YouTube, emails, texting, and much more. Sometimes people get distracted or don't focus on what's really important.

I think that public service, either as a politician or as a civil servant, is something very important because what happens here or what happens in the federal Parliament or what happens in every city council affects people's lives every day.

Earlier this week, we had a model Parliament. Students came in and were able to go through the process and understand the system. But it's a lot different nowadays than it was before, as I mentioned, with all the distractions. This simple bill hopefully will bring some attention to how government works and whether or not to participate in that.

Today we're debating a very simple thing: to keep municipal election voting places open until 9 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. Why is this important? We need to give every voter the opportunity to go out and cast their votes and exercise their civic rights. Furthermore, I think it's important to start a conversation to make democracy more accessible to all.

Today, I want to hear from other legislators from all three parties and try to figure out how we create a conversation to increase participation in public office.

I hope this bill is sent to committee, where we'll have an opportunity to hear from the public and to hear from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and from other civil servants and other members of the public, to get their points of view. Maybe they can amend or change the bill or suggest things so that people will be able to participate and have more voters coming out. We start that today. I fully expect it to hopefully go to committee and to come back up here for third reading debate.

In some countries—approximately 22—they have compulsory voting, which means that every registered voter has to vote or else he or she is fined or forced to do community service. Some of these countries are in South America, but one of the most interesting examples is Australia. Personally, I don't think we should use that system, but I want to explain what it does. In Australia, everyone is registered to vote. On election day, they have to bring their voter registration card and vote. If they don't, the government can do one of two things. They

can get a fine or they can be forced to do community work. So of course, voter turnout is really high—in the high 90s; 96%, 97%—depending on which election. That counts both for their federal elections and the various state elections inside Australia.

I personally don't agree because in our country we have a charter with fundamental rights, and one of those rights is freedom of expression. If we were to pass a law saying that everybody in Ontario who can vote has to vote, it would probably be challenged in court. I don't think judges would say that voting is more important than your freedom of expression. What we have to work on is trying to get people to participate, to come out and vote voluntarily, and not to force them to come out and vote.

Getting back to this bill: Provincial elections are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Municipal elections in Ontario start at 10 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. That's a two-hour difference. Last year, in 2014, we had a provincial election in June and a municipal election in late October. I was involved in both. I had to gear up my campaign, and that election day was June 12. My wife is a city councillor, and her election was at the end of October. So right after my election, I was helping her a bit—not too much; she can do well on her own. But still, I noticed a difference in the timing and how elections came out.

People have various working hours and different lifestyles today than they had 20 or 30 years ago. Thirty years ago, people usually finished work and the family would gather around the dinner table at 5 or 6 p.m., and people would either vote after that or before that. Nowadays, people have various work schedules. They can work in the evening or in the morning—flexible hours, not just in work, but also for people who are going to school, those who are teachers and people who are involved in other activities across Ontario.

Mr. Han Dong: It's 24 hours.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes. One member here said that it's 24 hours of work and activities. So I think we need to create a time where people can actually say, "I'm going to go in my car or I'm going to walk to the polling station and cast my vote."

The other thing that we have instituted for quite a while is advance polling. Advance polling means that days are prepared before the election date and people can vote at the advance poll, and that's provincially, federally and municipally. Municipally, they've really tried hard to create a long period of time before the election date when people can go to the location and cast their vote. I think it's over a week long. People can vote either in the morning or until nighttime. I think we're trying to accommodate voters to come out and vote, but I think we can do more than that.

I want to mention a personal perspective on how important one vote is. I just need to spend a couple of minutes here talking about what happened to me in my first election on November 14, 1988.

I was running that day to become a city councillor for the city of Scarborough. Mr. Speaker, not to bring you into the conversation, but you also ran for the first time

and your election was the same day, November 14, 1988, for the same position, city councillor, but in a different ward. You were elected by just one vote more to avoid a recount, whereas I won by four votes and that automatically created recounts. So I had three recounts, and at the end of the day I won by one vote. So of all people, I can say one vote—

Mr. Steve Clark: They should call you Landslide Lorenzo.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes. Well, I tell people now, "Your vote makes a difference." If someone had voted the other way, I probably wouldn't have gotten into politics in the first place.

But I'll just read the results, thanks to the library, who were able to provide me the results. Scarborough city councillor, ward 4, November 14, 1988: Lorenzo Berardinetti, 2,449; Kurt Christensen, 2,448; Ian Glynnwilliams, 1,934; Bill Ward, 1,010; Darryl McDowell, 318; George Legault, 292. Those are the final results, and in the end I won by one vote. One single vote, again, made a difference. That's why every single election, I tell people, "You've got to come out and vote. Here's my story."

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It was your wife, man.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I wasn't married back then, in 1988. This was, like, 27 years ago.

Interjection: You were still a bachelor.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yeah.

I can't explain the details—my time is very limited—but suffice it to say that the third recount took place on February 28, 1990, by a judge who recounted 27 ballots and determined that I won the election by one vote. I was happy that I won, but for the remaining time until the next election, which would be November 1991, everybody was approaching me and saying, "I got you elected." It got so ridiculous that I got a phone call from a gentleman one day who said, "You have to come see me because I got you elected. I voted for you, and so did my family, five other people." I went to his house, and it was a good two or three kilometres outside of my area. So I said to him, "You couldn't have voted for me." He goes, "Yeah, well, I found a way to vote for you anyways." So, again, it was kind of strange, but it was true.

I want to just review the results of what happened.

At the federal and provincial—Ontario—levels, we've seen a steady decline in voting.

1410

Back in 1867, 73.1% of people voted federally across Canada. In Ontario, in 1867, 73.9% of people voted. Nowadays, in the last federal election, on May 2, 2011, 61.1% voted. Provincially, they only had the results for October 6, 2011, but the result was 48.2%. That's less than half of all eligible voters who voted.

In the city of Toronto, they've made efforts to increase voter turnout, and it has worked. They increased the number of advance polls, as I mentioned earlier. In 2010, 50.55% voted, and last year, in 2014, 54.67% voted. There are various factors involved in that: They registered more voters, they advertised more and they had different ways of voting to encourage people to vote.

Still, though, it was 54.67%. The other part—let's say 50%—don't vote; they don't bother to.

So with this bill, I basically want to make sure that people come out and vote, and that their vote counts. I think that if we add one extra hour to municipal elections, maybe one person will come out and vote for someone and make a difference, like it did for me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad to provide a few comments on the record, on Bill 68. I understand the concern here, especially for voters in the GTA who struggle to make it home on time from work because of this government's failure to address gridlock. So I support the idea of extending voting hours.

But I want to talk about two other amendments that I think need to happen to the Municipal Elections Act, which I support and frankly hope we can add to this bill in committee.

The first is from a member of the government side that they should be very familiar with, because it was an initiative championed by a former Liberal member, Jean-Marc Lalonde. He tabled a private member's bill to reduce the lame-duck period that exists for municipal councils from their election in late October to December 1, when councils are finally sworn in. As we all know, meetings just took place here in Toronto for the OGRA/ROMA conference. There are many, many municipal issues before them to deal with. They can't really wait a month, to be stuck in some lame-duck limbo before they get down to business.

In 2011, Mr. Lalonde's bill received all-party support, but like so many great initiatives by MPPs in private members' business on Thursdays, the bill basically didn't go anywhere after it received second reading.

The second change I'd like to see is eliminating the excessively severe penalty for municipal candidates who file their expenses after the deadline. For those who are unaware, even one day late triggers an automatic forfeiture of the person's council seat if that candidate was successful. There's also a prohibition from seeking municipal office in the subsequent election, whether the candidate was successful or not. This is far more severe, I would suggest, than would happen for any of us if we were late. As most members know, they can ask the Chief Electoral Officer for an extension, and it's normally granted. The penalty for a municipal election is far more severe.

This came up in my riding in 2010. My friend Earl Brayton, who is a councillor in the township of Elizabethtown-Kitley, had to go to court to earn a reprieve from the act, costing him a lot of money and a lot of time. So I committed to Earl that I would work to change it. I introduced petitions on his behalf. I wrote to ministers of the day, and I got their assurances that that would happen.

I actually wrote to Minister Jeffrey in October 2013 to remind her that the window to amend the act prior to the 2014 municipal election was closing. You know what she

told me? She told me not to panic. She said they had plenty of time. But we all know that no amendments were made to the act last year for the elections; neither was my request to change the late filing or expense period—that Mr. Lalonde's bill would have done for the lame-duck period.

So I guess I have a message to the member for Scarborough Southwest: I say to you that I support your bill, and you can count on my support to try to push some of those other amendments that we need to the Municipal Elections Act. Thank you very much for your bill, and I look forward to supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to join the debate on Bill 68, the voting hours extension act, introduced by the member for Scarborough Southwest.

This is a short bill. In fact, I think it's one of the shortest bills I've seen since I was first elected. It revises the Municipal Elections Act to extend voting hours from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. Certainly, it's hard to argue against this change. Making it easier for people to exercise their right to vote is always a good thing: making it easier for people to participate in the democratic process, making it easier for people to cast a ballot and have a say on what happens in their community. There is research to show that making voting more convenient does encourage more people to vote. So it is possible that keeping the polls open one hour longer could increase voter turnout in municipal elections. But research also shows that this kind of reform, this kind of tinkering around the edges, has only a limited and marginal impact. The bill is not a game-changer for democratic participation—not by any stretch of the imagination.

What would be a game-changer—what would really invigorate and strengthen local democracy—is proportional representation. The problem is not that the polls close at 8 p.m.; the problem is the system of voting, whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level. The problem is the winner-takes-all or first-past-the-post system, which has the same basic flaws at every level of government.

People don't feel that their votes count. People don't feel that their issues matter. This is particularly the case for young people, who were mentioned by the member for Scarborough Southwest. People don't like the negative and adversarial campaigning that goes along with first-past-the-post. Most importantly, too often the people who get elected do not reflect the diversity of the people they represent.

The solution for these flaws is proportional representation. A study of 36 democracies over 55 years found that countries using proportional voting systems had a 7.5% increase in voter turnout. They had government policies that were more reflective of the median voter. They had citizens who felt more satisfied with democracy, even when their candidate or their party did not win. Most importantly, they had an 8% increase in the number of women elected.

Why is it important to elect more women? Because we make better decisions when we hear a diversity of views, when we have different people around the table bringing different experiences and perspectives to bear on the issues at hand. We know that many of the policies we talk about in this place have very different impacts on women, compared to men. Women continue to earn 30% less than men. They continue to be overrepresented in minimum wage jobs. They continue to be involuntary part-time workers because they can't get child care. They continue to experience violence from male abusers.

After the last election provincially, it was encouraging to see that we are making progress here in Ontario. We are electing more women, even under first-past-the-post. I'm especially proud that within the NDP caucus, we elected a majority of women MPPs, a first for Ontario and, I believe, for Canada. However, it will take years, even decades at the rate we are going, to achieve gender parity, with women holding 50% of elected offices in Canada. When we look to Europe, we easily see that the best way, the surest way to get more women elected is through proportional representation.

During the last Parliament, my former NDP colleague Jonah Schein proposed an alternative voting system for the city of Toronto. Many of you were here in this Legislature for the debate about a ranked ballot system. Even though the legislation was specific to Toronto, I have to tell you that the possibility of changing the way citizens vote in municipal elections in Ontario galvanized people in my riding of London West. I must have received over 100 emails from constituents who were eager for change and excited by the prospect of electoral reform, excited by the prospect of engaging more citizens and building a stronger democracy.

The last time electoral reform was on the table in Ontario was in 2003, when the Liberals formed a citizens' assembly to look at alternatives to first-past-the-post. After consulting widely, the assembly proposed mixed member proportional representation, which would have allowed voters to vote for both the candidate and the party, the system that is currently in place in Germany and New Zealand.

1420

The referendum on the proposal was, unfortunately, completely botched by both the Liberal government and Elections Ontario. With minimal budget, no real effort was put into educating the public about the proposal and about the issues involved, and as a result, the referendum failed.

By all means, let's go ahead and keep municipal polling stations open one hour longer. We certainly don't oppose this bill, but I have to say we are very disappointed by the missed opportunity this bill represents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this bill forward with the best of intentions. I also wish to thank the members from Leeds-Grenville and London West for their comments.

I must say I echo the sentiment of this bill and the democratic spirit that it encourages.

As members of this assembly, we know the importance of working with governments at all levels, and we understand the importance of the responsibilities at every level. As provincial politicians, we sit between municipalities and the federal government, striking a balance between the two. In our ridings, we see first-hand the impact of the decisions made at the municipal level, and so we know that our constituents must have ample opportunity to elect their municipal representatives. Municipal politics are significant, and they must be afforded voting hours akin to those that we find at the provincial and federal levels.

In Durham, I often say that we are Ontario writ small, in that our diversity and demographics reflect an image of our entire province.

The boundaries of my riding encompass three municipalities within the region of Durham: Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. Each of them would benefit in slightly different ways from an extension of the voting hours.

As the eastern anchor of the greater Toronto area, and sitting along the 401 on its southern border, Durham has a significant number of commuters, of which I am one: men and women, parents with new families and grandparents with established families, business people and community leaders—average people with very busy lives. They all spend significant amounts of time before and after work commuting into the city and returning home later than they would probably like.

As a commuter myself and a daily passenger on the GO train, I can attest that no matter how comfortable my journey, I return home to my family at an hour too close to 8 o'clock to consider doing much else, let alone travelling to a polling station and voting.

My constituents should be afforded the time to return home, to tend to their families and the needs in their homes, and still have enough time to make important decisions at a municipal polling station.

Of course, commuters are not alone in needing more time for voting. Durham, much like other urban-rural ridings on the fringes of large cities, is chosen as the home for many in retirement. Many older Ontarians who do not have the mobility that they require often seek the assistance of family members or transportation services to go about their daily lives. This adds time to the day, and can mean the difference between having enough time to vote and missing an opportunity.

This sentiment is heard from younger Ontarians as well, who have after-school programs, sports and important social lives.

The modern lifestyle at all ages is simply too evenly paced, and we must make sure that our democratic systems do not get overlooked in the hustle and bustle.

I would like to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest again for bringing this bill to the House. While I acknowledge its challenges, I look forward to supporting it in the best interests of my constituents and all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, I travel over an hour and a half some days to get back to my riding. Sometimes I leave this place way after 6. It's very difficult, really, to make it to a polling station in time to observe my democratic right, and that's something I take seriously. I never miss an opportunity to vote.

Again, all Ontarians should be afforded the same opportunity to vote, so I wholly support extending the hours by an additional hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to stand on behalf of my constituents and the PC caucus to talk on this bill.

I think, especially in the GTA, with all of the traffic concerns and so many bedroom communities and commuters, we all support giving people an extra hour to vote. But we also have to recognize that there are a lot of volunteers working on election day, and it's an extra hour for all of us involved in elections to find those volunteers, keep them fed, keep them happy till they wrap up and observe and do their scrutineering. It definitely makes the day go longer. As well, for people at home who are anxiously waiting for the election results along with all the media outlets, it means adding another hour of waiting for them. So we have to recognize that and look at why we're considering extending the hours to vote.

There are advance election opportunities for people. Oftentimes there's proxy voting and things like that, but it's not very well understood. I think a lot more can be done to educate the public on their options and to maybe encourage more people to vote in advance.

I know that I've had supporters, constituents in our riding, go to vote on advance voting days or at the official Elections Ontario office, and they were asked, "Are you going to be away on election day?" They said, "No. I just want to get it out of the way." Maybe they want to volunteer or they don't want to take a chance that they might be busy. They're told, "Really, advance voting is for people who are not available to vote on election day." Maybe we have to change that kind of thinking. Maybe we have to have more advance voting opportunities to make it easier, and actually encourage people to vote in advance instead of making them think that they should wait till election day.

We all know there are people who want to wait till the last minute because they're not sure how they're going to vote.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, it's traditional. We like to vote on the day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. It's a tradition. People do like to vote on election day. They feel like they're more a part of being engaged and knowing what's going on.

I've also heard from people who are concerned that their vote will get lost if they vote in advance.

Maybe we have to reassure people a little bit more.

In terms of who we think we're going to encourage, it remains to be seen if we'll get a higher youth turnout or a higher senior turnout. Maybe there are different reasons

why they're not voting and they don't feel engaged in the process.

At York University, they now allow voting for my riding of Thornhill on the campus. The campus is not in my riding, but they recognize that many of the students at the university live in the riding and that would encourage voter turnout, which it does, I believe.

The same thing can be said for the downtown core. Maybe we could have, with computers, specially trained Elections Ontario staff in the downtown core, which would allow people from all over the province who may be downtown on business or commuting or visiting to be able to vote at some well-advertised locations for any riding, so that they don't have to run home to their riding. The reality is, if you have an event on a Thursday evening, just extending the voting by an hour doesn't help people. They're not going to go back to their riding in the 905 and then come back downtown for an event.

This is one small problem that challenges us to increase voter turnout. It challenges us to get people more engaged, and it challenges us to work a little harder at looking at other options, including online voting. If you can now deposit a cheque online using a smart phone taking a picture and the banks can manage to have secure software, I don't see a reason why Elections Ontario can't work with all of us here in the Legislature at finding ways to have secure online voting.

1430

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I really want to commend everybody who is speaking in support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to rise here in the House today and to speak to this bill. As we know, the bill actually amends subsection 46(1) of the Municipal Elections Act to extend the municipal voting by one hour. I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The NDP supports changes that will give voters more access to democracy, access to voting. The extra hour, from 8 to 9, will help those who work shift work, perhaps. A nurse, for example, who works until 7:30 or 8 o'clock at night may now get to the polls. I can tell you that we had a lot of debate trying to get nurses to the polls in the day when I was actually doing that kind of work.

That sort of change is welcome, a first step in electoral reform. On the subject of reform, however, New Democrats have long supported changes that would ensure that our electoral systems on all levels of government are not only more accessible, but representative of our electorate, although I'm curious to understand and appreciate why the member from Scarborough Southwest is actually using a private member's slot to pass legislation, as opposed to the government just bringing this forward as a government bill. Why doesn't the government just do it if it's so important? It's a very easy bill that I'm sure the government could pass in a week or two here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, I wouldn't count on that.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Well, I wouldn't count on it either, Mr. Bradley.

As you know, almost a year ago, New Democrats introduced a bill that would have allowed the city of Toronto to create an alternate voting system. The bill was in support of a local city of Toronto resolution—you know, a city that has millions of people—to establish a ranked balloting voting system as well as a proportional representation system.

As we know, the ranked system is one where voters number their choice of candidates. If no candidate wins 50%, the voters then have a second and third choice, until that candidate actually receives 50% of the vote.

Ranked ballots ensure the electoral representative has received the support of a majority of voters. It motivates candidates to achieve greater success, to cast a wider net, and it restores faith in the democratic process.

Ranked ballots also eliminate the dilemma of strategic voting, something we often see happen at all levels of government, most recently in the provincial election back in May. By ensuring that voting matters and that their votes won't ultimately go to waste, voters are more likely, I think, to come out and vote for the person that they want to win, as opposed to voting because of fear.

It was good to see the member from Scarborough–Guildwood replicate the New Democratic bill, though her bill eliminated the proportional representation component of it; it did not have that included in the bill. New Democrats, of course, supported the bill nonetheless.

The PR system is an electoral system in which political parties are only able to gain support in direct proportion to the number of votes cast for them. According to Fair Vote Canada, Canada has had 16 majority governments at the federal level since World War I, and yet a mere four of those have won a majority of the popular vote. I think that's a bit of a troubling statistic. Around the world, Germany, the Netherlands, Brazil and 78 other democracies use some form of PR during their elections that vote in their national assemblies.

More so, over the last decade, 10 different commissions, assemblies and reports have all recommended that we reform our systems to include proportional representation, and rightfully so, but we have yet to do anything about it.

On the provincial level, in this most recent election, only 38.6% of voters voted for this Liberal government, and Ontario saw a voter turnout of only 52%. That's just over half of eligible voters. Of them, of those voters in the last election, four out of five people did not vote for this Liberal government, and yet the party still received 54% of the seats. That is very unfortunate.

According to Elections Ontario, 31,000 voters formally declined their ballots in this election, compared to a mere 2,300 in 2011. It is a very disturbing number, and we, as legislators and elected officials, should feel that that's a very strong message coming to us. Instead, we continue to have a declining voter turnout on all levels of government, and a jaded electorate that is cynical, untrusting and skeptical of our electoral system.

In closing, New Democrats are proud to be able to get up and speak to this initiative. We hope that we continue to implement positive reforms that will bring our electoral systems up to speed with those around the world. These reforms are necessary and imperative before we can see any hope of turning around the voter turnout numbers and restoring faith into the people who put us in these seats in the first place.

I think it's very important that we continue to talk about these issues. I know that in the last four years, I've had people in my office each year to talk about proportional representation and to talk about ranked balloting. Certainly, that ranked balloting piece was almost there the last time around. Unfortunately, it didn't quite make it back into this Legislature. There were committee hearings, and it didn't make it back.

I think it's incumbent on the government to be actually listening to the people of this province when it comes to electoral reforms. Let's move this piece of legislation forward so that it's in place in a timely way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to also thank the members who have stood up in this House to speak about this very important private member's bill: the members from Leeds–Grenville, London West, Durham, Thornhill and Welland.

I want to start off by saying that I do agree with the member from London West when she says that we need to elect more women into government. I'm very proud to say that I am the first woman elected in the riding of Davenport.

I also agree with the member when she says that we need to also have a more diverse government. I'm extremely, extremely proud of our Liberal caucus and how diverse we are, representing what is truly our province and all of the various colours, religions, backgrounds, sexual diversity—everything that we have in our province, we have here on this side. So I'm very proud of our Liberal caucus.

I have to agree with the member from Thornhill when she says that we do need to do a little bit more—and perhaps do a lot more—in terms of educating people on advance polls and how important it is to get people out on advance polls.

However, I don't agree with her argument that if we were to have this private member's bill passed, we would need more volunteers on E-Day. Her argument for advance polls is pretty much the same here: We would also need to have more volunteers helping out at the advance polls. That's one of the things I don't agree with.

Ranked ballots: Members from the third party talked about ranked ballots. I just want to commend the member from Scarborough–Guildwood and all the work that she did in trying to put forth a bill that would actually address the issue of ranked ballots. Unfortunately, we had to go to an election, because members from the opposite side did not want us to pass what we wanted to pass at the time, so that fell off. Had we not had this election, we

probably would have had that private member's bill already as law.

Today we are here to talk about my colleague from Scarborough Southwest and the private member's bill that he has presented here today. I want to thank him for bringing forth this important bill. Thank you for putting forward this important piece of legislation, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m., which I'm very proud to speak on today.

Mr. Speaker, our democratic system underpins everything we do here in the Legislature. The reason we are here today is because constituents from all of our ridings exercised their democratic right to entrust us with these positions. Voting is tantamount to democracy, and as elected officials, it is of absolute importance for us to encourage voting in any way that we can.

Indeed, much is often said about the troubling trend of low voter turnout. I think it is really our obligation to allow as many people as possible to come out and to exercise their democratic right. One of the primary ways for us to promote voting is really simply by making the polls more accessible to as many eligible voters as we can.

1440

The member from Scarborough Southwest's initiative takes important steps to tackle this issue by doing just that. By keeping municipal polls open from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m., we open the democratic system to a much greater pool of potential voters.

If we look at my riding of Davenport, the utility of such a legislation certainly becomes apparent. Davenport is such a diverse riding, which incorporates a very wide variety of different voters. Whether it is the elderly citizen, blue collar workers or the young professional on west Queen West, I'm always impressed by how active and engaged so many of my constituents are with their local issues.

However, my constituents, due to their varied obligations, all find difficulties making it to the polls on election night. Working to resolve these difficulties would in turn work to open up our democracy to even more voices. In particular, the elderly in my riding, in the areas like Corso Italia or Little Portugal, find it difficult to reach the polls and, as such, find voting as something difficult.

Even young people see a disconnect from the ballot box, in part because they are unable to find time to vote after studying all day and working multiple jobs, or after a long commute home. How many people here in this House know how long it takes to commute from one place to the other in this city, and it does take a long time, having to run to catch trains etc. A lot of people in my riding who have to take a lot of transit to get places in the downtown core are finding it very difficult to get to the polling stations for 8 p.m.

Many families call Davenport their home, and these are often young working families with small children. In many scenarios, the fact that there is an election does not rank as a top priority for such busy individuals. Whether

it's in the northern part of my riding by Eglinton Avenue, or in the condos by Queen Street West, election night is filled with a great deal of confusion unrelated to the casting of one's ballot.

In young families, both parents may work all day, and when they come home they need to worry about picking up their children, preparing dinner and spending quality time with their family. After all these duties are properly attended to, it's often the case that, before you know it, it's 8:30 at night and the polls are closed. I'm sure that this is often the case for many of my constituents where, for the average person, voting is not prioritized over all of these extremely important obligations.

I have two young boys, and I know that when I get home, that's what my end of day is like: trying to make sure that they've done their homework, that they've studied, that they have their backpacks ready for the next day and we've got lunches on the go, after cleaning up the kitchen and getting the kids down to bed. It's a very, very busy household.

For a lot of people, it isn't just apathy in the political system that leads to them not casting their ballots; it really is the busyness of the daily lives.

The need for this legislation certainly cuts across all ages and employment. While there will be a cost to paying election workers for an additional hour, and the volunteers, in my view, if this means more people will vote, then it is worth it. We as elected officials must work to address the issue of low voter turnout.

Thank you again to the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this important issue to the Legislature here today. I'm happy that I could put my voice in support of this bill and I look forward to further debate on this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a pleasure to rise today and add a few comments to this debate. As others have indicated, I'm certainly going to support the motion and give commendation to the member for making this kind of change, or at least moving in that direction.

I think that what this bill does is serve to remind us about how lifestyles are changing and that, while voting is something that, fortunately, in this culture has been around for quite a while, we have to keep up with the times—literally, keep up with the times. Voting opportunity, then, has to reflect that kind of change in time.

People have mentioned the advance polls and things like that. Personally, I think that that kind of flexibility in voting is an extremely important element of making voting accessible to people.

Democracy is a fragile system. It needs a lot of tending, it needs a lot of integrity, and it needs a lot of action to make sure that we have a healthy democracy. One of the least invasive expressions of that is, of course, to show up and vote.

There was a time not so long ago where you could tell the time by the activities going on in the community. The schools all got out at the same time. People left their

offices and workplaces at the same time. With that kind of very strong rhythm, you could also have a reflection of the polling time as being very rigid. But over the years, we've seen that kind of predictability of people's lifestyles challenged considerably. Stores hours are up to 24 hours a day, but they're certainly very flexible, and family life reflects that change. Work schedules can be varied. The question of transportation—being able to get home in time to vote—is reflected in this private member's bill. I think it's really part of that whole process of dynamism in our community and lifestyle today, which is really 24/7.

I want to end on an interesting historical note, and that is that a couple of hundred years ago it wasn't uncommon for people who were running for office to offer drinks in the local tavern. That would encourage people to have a better view of how they should vote. There was quite a long period of time when this was allowed, and there was a great deal of urgency that came about to restrict that. There was a time in Ontario when the bars had to close a few hours before the end of voting.

Reflect back on this time a couple of hundred years ago, when in fact people were making sure that they could encourage voting in a certain direction. The whole history of voting hours is a reflection on our community and our lifestyle. For that reason, it should continue to reflect our lifestyle and make those hours more conducive to the current lifestyle that people have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member from Scarborough Southwest. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I began this conversation and debate earlier, I said that I hope it goes to committee and that there's more conversation. Listening to all the speakers today, from Leeds, London West, Durham, Thornhill, Welland, Davenport, York-Simcoe—and I apologize if I missed someone's riding—they all have different aspects to add to this. I appreciate that very much, and I hope it goes to committee and becomes part of a larger conversation, because life has changed a lot.

I just wanted to mention one thing—while I was listening—in 1995, I had the opportunity, as a Scarborough city councillor, to travel with the mayor to China—actually, various parts of Asia, but we were in China and Beijing. We had a tour that day and we were sent back to our hotel rooms. I slipped out by myself and decided to take a look at Tiananmen Square. All of a sudden, there was a guy who came up behind me. He was part of the delegation. He said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm just taking a walk." He goes, "Why are you taking a walk?" I said that I just wanted to look around. "I'm going to have to join you here." I said, "Why?" He goes, "That's the way our party works, so I'm tagging along." Then he asked some questions. He goes, "You're so young. How did you get elected?" I said that I ran for office. He just scratched his head, and he said to me, "In China, the politicians are older men, in their sixties and seventies. How old are you? Thirty years old? What are

you doing here?" I thought how fortunate it is that we have the opportunity to exercise our votes and that anyone can run for office. Any one of us can run for office. We all ran. We have different backgrounds. We come together and we debate. This is private members' time, so we don't have to vote along party lines.

I really appreciate all the comments that were made here. All I want to do is make the system a little bit better. That's all. There are so many ways to improve it. It will always be better than what they have in some countries, like China.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of regular business.

1450

UTILITY TASK AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES AUTOQUADS ET LES VÉHICULES POLYVALENTS

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les autoquads et les véhicules polyvalents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to rise to debate Bill 58, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles.

Over the past number of years, I've had countless inquiries from constituents wondering where they are able to drive their utility task vehicles in particular. In the fall of 2013, I was happy to put forward the notion in the PC white paper A Champion for Northern Jobs and Resources. In November, over a year ago, I was pleased to speak to the motion that was put forward by the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, which received unanimous support in the Legislature. That was well over a year ago.

To give a little bit of background, the rules regarding ATVs, all-terrain vehicles, are very specific, and they come from 2003. The definition of an ATV is a vehicle that has four wheels, carries one person and that you straddle—so quite specific. The rules in Ontario allow for an ATV to be used on some designated provincial highways, and otherwise it's up to municipalities.

The more rural municipalities tend to be freer in terms of allowing use of ATVs. For example, in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, in Parry Sound district, which is more rural, all the municipalities—I think with the exception of the town of Parry Sound, which is more urban—allow ATVs pretty much anywhere on the roads. In most cases, that's small back roads, little dirt roads. In the district of Muskoka, it's a little more of a patchwork;

I think the only municipality that allows ATVs anywhere is the township of Georgian Bay.

In the last couple of years, some of the bigger towns like Bracebridge and Gravenhurst have designated certain parts of the towns where they allow ATVs. For example, I happen to live a half-hour drive from the urban part of Bracebridge, but still in the town. Under the current rules, you can actually ride an ATV on the provincial highway that goes by out to that area; it's one of the designated provincial highways. But until the town of Bracebridge, just last year, said that you could ATV on the dirt roads in the area of Vankoughnet, where I live, you couldn't actually ride on the smaller municipal roads. That's changed, but that's up to the municipalities, as it should be.

However, as I mentioned at the beginning, the definition of an ATV is very specific: just one person. In recent years, we've seen the development—in the last 10 years, there have been all kinds of UTVs that have been developed that are side-by-side, where you can carry two or three people. They may have bucket seats; they may have a bench seat. They tend to have a pickup box in the back so that you can carry loads of firewood or whatever else you might want to carry. I would say also, with the development of all those vehicles, if anything, they're probably safer in most cases than a traditional ATV, and they probably have more appeal to, say, seniors who might find it difficult to ride a traditional ATV or people who just want to use them for more work purposes.

But the way the rules stand right now, if you happen to live in, say, Kearney, north of Huntsville in Parry Sound district, and you're on some small dirt road, you could drive your ATV down the road to access a woodlot, but you can't drive the UTV.

This bill is about expanding the definition of ATVs to include utility task vehicles. Those would be vehicles like a Polaris Ranger or—there are various different models made, by Bombardier, Honda, Kawasaki and Argo. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga has made sure I'm aware that Argos, which are vehicles that have either six or eight wheels and are kind of an amphibious vehicle made right here in Ontario—he wanted to make sure that the definition of UTV included those vehicles.

In most cases, being able to use a road is just to be able to access a trail. So as I say, if it were me, I might have a 100-acre lot down the road that I want to cut firewood on. I want to be able to drive legally down the dirt road to access that woodlot and then come back without breaking the law. Certainly for the hunting population out there, it would be a case of being able to access the trails or to go between trails—in most cases, a relatively short distance on the roads. People don't want to be riding them on the roads other than to access trails, in most cases, or to access woodlots. It could be hunters who want to access hunting trails and locations. It might be a farmer who wants to get to another side of his property and needs to go down a side road. It could be a golf course that needs—to go drive down the road a little bit. There are various different situations.

The rules to do with some vehicles are a little grey. I noticed even around Queen's Park here, they have some vehicles like—I think it's a John Deere; I don't know the name of the actual vehicle, but it's a UTV. They have a Kubota RTV that they use for salting around the precinct. It could be considered, under the current rules, an instrument of husbandry, in which case, if it has a slow moving vehicle sign, it may be legal, but it's kind of in a grey area. I know a few years back the Kubota dealership in Bracebridge was just transporting their Kubota RTV to the Bracebridge Fall Fair, assuming that it was legal under the rules to do with an instrument of husbandry, with a slow-moving vehicle sign on it, and they got ticketed by the OPP.

For the people buying these, we need to have some clarity, and we currently don't. So that's what this private member's bill is about. It's about providing more access—and I see the time is slipping by quickly, so I would like to read some quotes that I have received in support of the private member's bill. In particular, I received from ATV Ontario Tourism—that is Andrew Ryeland, who happens to be in the Parry Sound area and operates Bear Claw Tours. He wrote, "ATV Ontario Tourism Initiatives Inc. ... is encouraged to see MPPs from all parties expressing the will to update Ontario's out-of-date off-highway vehicle regulations. Members like Norm Miller know how important off-highway vehicles are to the economic prosperity of their ridings." It's from Andrew Ryeland, president of ATV Ontario Tourism Initiatives. He operates Bear Claw Tours. He does a big event in the spring each year called Spring Jam. I know he also—I've seen it on his website—uses Honda side-by-side UTVs as well in his business.

We have a quote from the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors: "COHV supports all responsible efforts to more equitably treat owners and riders of all types of off-highway vehicles. In this regard we strongly support the private members' bills brought before the Legislature related to more equitable access. Off-road riding is a healthy, family recreation and it contributes significantly to the economy of Ontario." It's from Bob Ramsay, president of COHV.

I've had a lot of letters from the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders, quite a few letters. I'll just summarize a few of them. They want to be included in this legislation. If this bill passes, I would recommend that they come before committee, if it gets before a committee, and/or participate in the review of off-road vehicle safety in Ontario, which was just announced yesterday by MTO, the Ministry of Transportation. They write, "We are happy to support Bill 58 both in its non-partisan spirit and the sound reasoning behind it."

1500

"Additionally, the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders encourages further enhancements to this bill that would include licensed and insured off-road motorcycles and other recreational vehicles. Our experience has shown that there is a real need to develop improved highway access legislation that serves all types of off-road recrea-

tional vehicles, for practical, economic and safety reasons, as well as much-simplified administration and enforcement.”

They go on; I don't have time to read it. That was from Brian Knechtel, president of the Ontario Federation of Trail Riders.

I see I'm down to almost two minutes, so I'm not going to be able to cover all the points that I wanted to.

I did want to mention that I think Ontario has a lot to learn from Quebec on this file. Currently, the rules in Quebec do allow UTVs on roads. They actually have a network of trails. They even plow the trails in the winter-time for UTVs and ATVs; I'm not sure whether that necessarily makes sense. But I would say, generally, on the trail issue, Quebec does a much better job with trails: with snowmobile trails, with ATV trails, with cycling trails. They have the Route verte that covers the whole province and is also used for snowmobile trails in the winter-time.

I can see I'm down to a minute, so I won't be able to tell my whole story.

I had the pleasure of snowmobiling around the Gaspé, in Quebec, the first week of February. Because they have this fine network of trails, and enough users, it creates a critical mass so that you then have the accommodations and the restaurants, to make for a pleasant experience for somebody who wants to visit the area. I would simply say that we could learn from what Quebec is doing. There, even in the small, little towns, you'll see people pull up in a UTV, park at a restaurant and go in and eat there.

I think it's time to update the rules here in the province of Ontario. I've heard from many members on this side of the Legislature who support this: the member from Huron-Bruce, who told me she has heard from a lot of constituents; the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock; the member from Leeds-Grenville; and certainly the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, who wanted to put in a good plug for Argo.

I look forward to debate on this issue. I think it is time to update the rules. I was pleased to see announced just yesterday that MTO is starting a process to try to get some input on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a great pleasure. I get a chance to yet again speak to this issue, because this is not the first time, this is not the second time and this is not the third time. I think it might be more than three times that this particular issue has come to the Legislature.

Listen, this is a no-brainer, as was said last week when my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane raised this in the House. These particular vehicles are actually safer than the ATVs that I have; I've got a quad. These particular vehicles, I would argue, are a lot safer and afford an opportunity for people to be able to use these things for everything from clearing the snow on their driveways to hauling the garbage to the dump to taking a ride out with your loved one out on a nice dirt

road somewhere, to enjoy the outdoors of northern Ontario or southwestern Ontario or wherever you might live in this beautiful province, to go fishing, partridge hunting or whatever it might be. These particular vehicles, I would argue, are a much safer vehicle than others out there that are available for people to be able to cruise the bush with.

The example was used where a number of people have used these in order to put a plow in front of them, to plow their driveway. There have been a couple of examples where the person is on their property but has to back out onto the road in order to clear the entrance of their driveway, and they get charged because the wheels end up touching the highway or end up touching the municipal road. Clearly, this is something that's got to be fixed.

The good news is that we know, as a result of the pressure that was put on by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and now the pressure put on by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka and others before, that finally the government is moving on doing a consultation in regard to regulatory change that will, hopefully, lead to these particular vehicles being used.

I can tell you that was greeted in northern Ontario with applause, quite frankly. I know that I heard from my constituency staff and others that across northern Ontario, the news got out yesterday that the government is looking at changing the regulatory part of this in order to allow them to be used. The media across northern Ontario has been quite supportive in thanking Mr. Vanthof the week before, and I'm sure they will do the same for Mr. Miller this time around for actually getting this thing done.

I think it's a good demonstration of what can happen at private members' hour. It's not just the government that has the good ideas. Members of this assembly from all sides of the House have good ideas that they bring to the floor. In most cases, when you bring a private member's bill, you're very, very lucky if you actually get your private member's bill passed and enacted into law. Normally, they will get second reading. You might be lucky and get some committee hearings. You may even get third reading. But enactment of a private member's bill sometimes doesn't even happen after third reading, because normally a government wants to do it themselves. Well, you know what? If the government wants to do this, let's do it and let's do it right. Let's make sure that we consult with those people that need to be consulted with and do this thing because it is the right thing to do.

Je peux vous dire qu'il y a beaucoup de monde dans mon comté, dans la région de Timmins, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock et d'autres, qui, vraiment, sont contents que le gouvernement a fait ces changements-là parce qu'ils voient, franchement, que les vieux règlements étaient des règlements écrits dans le temps avant que ces machines-là aient même été mises sur le marché. Les règlements avaient besoin d'être améliorés pour être capable de refléter ce qui se passe aujourd'hui avec l'industrie mobilière à travers toute la province. So, donc, c'est une bonne nouvelle.

Again, I just want to say to my good friend Mr. Vanthof, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, job well done. It is pretty clear—it was helpful to be able to bring this forward in getting the government to finally do something that's right. Let's hope that there are more things like this that can happen in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about this private Bill 58 from my good friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I do have to admit that I have to be somewhat polite to the member because my son lives in his riding. I'm not sure who he voted for, but he has high regard for the member. He's been living in that part of the province, near Bala, for the last 10 or 12 years.

I come from eastern rural Ontario. What Bill 58 reflects on is vehicles a lot of my constituents have and use every day. We talk about the convenience of having these vehicles for whatever reason we want to have them, but somehow, sometimes—I know that we talked a little bit about the economic opportunities from allowing these vehicles, one from a recreational standpoint, similar to snowmobiles and other such vehicles—people use them for a holiday, for tourism—but also from sales or manufacturing. I think there is an economic spin-off. It's something that we certainly need to consider in this House.

You know, sometimes we hear that private members' bills don't go anywhere. Well, Speaker, they might not make an immediate impact, but the fact that we debate them in this House and it gets attention from the public, it comes to a point where if something makes a lot of sense, it just elevates it within the government, and that's with any government in power. I think we've seen a perfect example with this particular piece of legislation.

I just want to talk a little bit about where things are. There has been a lot of interest, as I mentioned a minute ago, in this topic as of late. I know that there are, as of right now, three private members' bills tabled related to off-road vehicle use, two from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Bills 51 and 58, and one from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Bill 46.

Bill 46 was debated last week and it received all-party support. The member for Parry Sound spoke during debate on that particular bill.

Just some statistics on the off-road vehicle piece: In 2013, there were over 407,000 off-road vehicles registered in the province of Ontario. According to the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, over 11,000 of these were new ATVs that were sold in Ontario in 2013 alone. That refers to the economic benefit that these vehicles provide in our communities.

1510

Mr. Speaker, every year more and more people seem to be buying and using these types of vehicles right across the province, and the ORV industry continues to modernize and change. That is why it's important that we balance this kind of modernization with road safety considerations.

We should be very proud that we have the safest roads in North America, and I think the people of Ontario need to make sure that we keep that in perspective. But we know that there's always more that we can do to improve the safety of our roads.

As always, keeping our roads safe is the highest priority for our government. That is why our government has taken a number of concrete actions to keep both drivers and ORV riders safe. MTO staff continue to work closely with more than 150 road safety partners to develop and implement public education initiatives at the community, regional and provincial level. These partners include police agencies, injury-prevention practitioners, ORV clubs and trail organizations right across the province. MTO staff and these partners attend annual trade shows, make public presentations, develop and distribute public education material, create community displays, and deliver interactive programs to young riders in partnership with local secondary and elementary schools.

An important component of these initiatives is promoting youth rider safety. I think that's where it starts. Regardless of the safety that we build into whatever vehicle, we always have to depend on education.

Ontario's second annual ATV Safety Week will take place in May 2015. MTO has launched four ATV safety videos to assist the public in learning how to safely operate their ORV. An online knowledge-assessment tool has also been produced to allow riders to test their safety IQ.

Speaker, as we continue to debate this private member's bill, I will certainly support the initiative to allow these vehicles, once we've hit all the points, to make sure that they're safe—not only for these vehicles, but also the safety of others, which we sometimes tend to forget. Sometimes we think we know how to handle one of these vehicles, but it's also people who are not in the vehicle who we have to be concerned about.

It has been a pleasure speaking to this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 58, introduced by my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. This bill is being watched very closely in my riding of Leeds–Grenville and, I suggest, in rural ridings all over the province.

As we've heard, the bill would amend regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act to permit two-up ATVs and side-by-side utility task vehicles to be legally operated on roads where other ATV classes are allowed.

If you're watching from home, no, this debate isn't a repeat. I don't want you to change the channel. We have debated the issue of fairness for ATV classes previously here at Queen's Park. In fact, just last week, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had his bill passed. It was a very similar bill.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes. Give him a hand. He did very well. Good job.

Back in November 2013, the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, from the government side, had a motion on this issue pass, as well.

Speaker, I don't want to count my chickens before they're hatched, but I have a very strong feeling that this bill will get the same treatment by members today. That means we'll have passed a motion and two private members' bills on the matter. Yet when it comes to action by this government, the wheels in the Ministry of Transportation continue to spin. The minister is stuck in neutral while ATV and UTV owners are left wondering what on earth it takes to get action on a very straightforward issue to MPPs from all parties, who they support. Not once, not twice, but as of today, it will be three times.

I've heard from so many folks in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I've written to two Ministers of Transportation. I've tabled petitions in support of this issue. Every time, essentially, the response is the same. It's "Be patient, Steve." But frankly, people in my riding are running out of patience on this very simple issue.

Last fall I got an excellent email from Dianne Beach, who lives near Elgin in beautiful Rideau Lakes township, a fabulous place to explore on your ATV. Dianne and her husband own two-up ATVs. She sent me a detailed 10-point email on why they deserve the same treatment as her friends who own ATVs permitted under regulation 316/03.

I don't have time to read all 10 points. I just want to highlight a couple. One of them, her number 4: "With these two-ups, we have to have a licence plate for the machine, insurance, road pass and my own driving licence."

The point that really hammered home the issue for me was number 7: "We have grandchildren, and they enjoy getting out in the wilderness. They see things otherwise they would never get a chance to—the hidden wonders of the outdoors. What happened to participation and teaching our children of life? We have taught our grandchildren if they see something of interest, we will stop." I think that's what the bill is all about: allowing more people to get out and explore what Ontario has to offer.

In the little time I have left, I just want to talk about two other points.

The first is what the amendment to regulation 316/03 doesn't do, and that is allow ATVs, two-ups and side-by-sides on municipal roads. There's been some confusion in my riding about that. I want to ensure everybody understands that road ATVs are allowed, and those decisions are with municipalities. They're going to continue to be with municipalities in consultation with their residents. The bill doesn't change local decision-making.

The second thing I've heard—and the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned it, and it was mentioned by a number of off-road motorcycle enthusiasts in my riding, like Dave Chartrand of North Augusta, Trevor and Stan Strickland, and Judy Kingston, who are all from Lombardy. It's the same thing. I know that the member behind me, Mr. Miller, mentioned this issue. The Ontario Federation of Trail Riders had mentioned this, and he

mentioned them in his remarks. I agree that we need to get this and the other concerns of the off-road vehicle owners in front of committee.

Again, I think we all agree on this. For everyone, we're waiting on action by the government. I truly, truly hope that the third time is the charm. We need to hear a commitment from the minister and their parliamentary assistant, but I'm glad that we're having this debate again in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour to stand up today and speak on behalf of the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane to Bill 58, the Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act, brought forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I wholeheartedly support this bill, as I wholeheartedly supported the motion on November 7, 2013, from the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Although this place tends to be very fractious at times, here's an issue, the issue of allowing side-by-sides to be governed under the same regulations as all-terrain vehicles, that is agreed on by, you would think, all three parties, because they've supported it a couple of times.

So what's the problem? Because it would seem that this is a fair—and actually, for the government to do this, they don't need to pass a law; it's a regulation change. Those of us in rural Ontario who depend on these vehicles for work, who use them with our families for leisure, for whom it's become a part of our being, are getting past the point of perplexed about why the government doesn't move on this.

But we've had a few clues. While we were speaking, the Chair of Cabinet mentioned a couple of times the environmental impact of these vehicles. Perhaps he would rather the people in northern Ontario walk to save what he believes is an impact. These vehicles are tested for their emissions. If they were governed more closely—that could also be governed more closely.

1520

The fact is, when you have kids or teenagers in my riding who take an ATV to work, as opposed to a 10- or 15-year-old car, I'm sure the ATV has fewer emissions. It's becoming plainly evident that a lot of people on the other side, on the government side, quite frankly, do not understand rural Ontario.

Last week, when I was debating basically the same bill, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change across the aisle said, "You don't understand, John. This isn't an urban-rural issue, because I have friends in Muskoka who use these." Yes, Muskoka is rural Ontario. And I don't want this to be an urban-rural issue, but it is, quite frankly, becoming one.

Mr. Chris Ballard: Because you keep making it one.

Mr. John Vanthof: We're making it one because this government isn't moving on an issue that's extremely important in places with no public transportation, places where sometimes the roads aren't even cleaned. When people look at other provinces and see that these things

are being used with no problem, that they're being used legally, some people come to me and say, "John, we already have some people who are using UTVs where they shouldn't be using them." And they should be charged, just like when someone is using an ATV in a spot where they shouldn't. If you want to be a cowboy with an ATV, you know what? You should face the brunt of the law.

But if you're a senior couple and you're using your UTV for the same purpose that you've used your ATV for the last 20 years, and now, because you can't straddle that ATV anymore, you trade your two ATVs for one UTV and do exactly the same thing—you get in your UTV from your home and drive to your camp, and you have to go on the side of Highway 560 for two kilometres—you've been doing it legally for the last 10 years, and now, because you have something with a steering wheel that, quite frankly, is safer, you're now an outlaw, according to this government. That is the problem.

We all agree. All the parties have supported this several times. This doesn't take a huge change. I'd like to congratulate the government for announcing that they're actually looking at a regulation change. I'd like to encourage everyone to go to the Ministry of Transportation website and tell the government how you feel, and hopefully, if we're loud enough and we make the argument enough times—and hopefully it's not like Groundhog Day that we're here again next year. I think my frustration is showing. But my frustration is the frustration of people who want to use these vehicles—side-bysides and two-ups—who want to obey the law and are not allowed.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: How long does it take?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, how long is this going to take? The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka was rightly talking about people in Quebec. My riding is right on the border of Quebec. Relatives on one side of the border can use their UTV within the law, and they respect the law. Basically, in Quebec you're allowed to use a UTV and respect the law; in Ontario, if you are a rural resident and want to use a UTV, basically the current law does not respect the people.

A law should evolve along with the common use of a tool. If UTVs were the weapon of choice for bank robbers, I could understand. But they're not. Another thing someone brought to his attention, and it's a valid point: What happens if this regulation is passed and all of a sudden UTVs get to look as big as Ford F-150 pickup trucks? Well, that means the law would have to evolve once more, and the law would have to make sure that these vehicles are used for what they're intended.

The argument is, "We can't change the law because who knows where this is going"? Those same people, 100 years ago, said, "We can't allow automobiles because of the horse; an automobile is much more dangerous than a horse." That's the same argument these people and this government are using. It's using environmental arguments.

It's time once and for all to respect the people of rural Ontario and allow them to use a vehicle in a law-abiding

way so they can have full enjoyment of their province as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Following on my good friend and colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane and my other long-time good friend who is sponsoring this bill, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, I thought it would be only fair that the government ask an urban member to stand up and to say something about this.

First of all, for those of us who live in the cities, a lot of the terminology is unfamiliar to us. You hear about the ATVs and the UTVs and you wonder: Is that the same as the closed-circuit TV or the cable TV? In fact, the ATV refers to the all-terrain vehicle, which means it's something you ride with handlebars, very much like a bike, and the UTV is, as my friends have explained to me, "Think of the paradigm of golf cart."

My good friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about: Are there unintended consequences if, to use his analogy, the UTV evolves to be the same size as a Ford F-150? Then we'll have to address it. I agree with him; I think that's a perfectly valid point.

Let me give you an example historically where just such a thing happened. In the 19th century in New Delhi, under the Brits, the British had a problem in that there were too many cobras in New Delhi, so they paid a bounty for every cobra skin that was turned over to them. As it happened, the unintended consequences were that a lot of local people began to breed cobras so that they could turn over the skin and make some money. There is a point to mention to my friend. What happened when the British caught on? All the people who had been breeding them just released them into the streets. But that's not what we're here to talk about, because the member has actually introduced a serious measure and I think it deserves a measured response.

In fairness to my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, I'm just going to quote from a document that he gave me a few minutes ago, and he said, "I didn't have time to actually mention this." He pointed out that the Ministry of Transportation is now actually asking for comments in writing and by email on exactly this issue. It's asking people: Would they send in submissions? So out there, if you have a feeling on this, you've got between now and the 13th of April of this year to send in your comments to the Ministry of Transportation. They're asking a number of questions. They ask, for example: What assessment criteria should the ministry use to determine what roads an off-road vehicle could travel on or along the shoulder of? They ask: Should existing on-road access be maintained? They ask a number of questions that I think are very serious ones. If you have a stake in this, I think you should download this questionnaire, have a look at it, and send it in.

It also shows something that my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane was wondering. He said, "Is the government actually going to move?" This is showing—at the risk of being a prop—that the Ministry of Trans-

portation has in fact taken some ownership of the issue and said, "We think it's time to have an intelligent, adult dialogue about doing something for utility terrain vehicles that we already do for all-terrain vehicles."

As an urban member, I'm thinking to myself: If technically, up north, someone who uses a UTV, as both members have mentioned, to do what they have done for years with an ATV—and my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about: Would an elderly couple who had once had two all-terrain vehicles and who have traded them in for a UTV, something like the equivalent of a golf cart—would they be technically legal if they're in two ATVs but illegal if they're driving a UTV? If it sounds like it doesn't make sense, then that's why God created a Legislature and put adults here to make good law. That's what I think we're trying to do: make some good law in this circumstance.

1530

Now, I'm kind of interested in that because every year at end of November, in the Streetsville Santa Claus parade, I and my trusty cat, Obi-Wan, drive a golf cart right down Queen Street in Streetsville. Does that mean, on what would be classified as a UTV, that technically I might be in violation of the law? I really don't know.

There are apparently, as of the last year for which figures are available, some 407,585 off-road vehicles registered in Ontario, and some 11,000 new ATVs were sold in Ontario in 2013 alone. So, very clearly, this is an issue that the province needs to take seriously, devote some thought to and come up with a workable framework of law to allow people who have a UTV which they intend to use for the purpose for which the vehicle was designed, where they don't, for example, intend to use it in an urban park—and as my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka pointed out to me, many of these laws are in fact the children of the municipality, not the province. It means that what's right in the north need not necessarily be right in an urban area, which I think is intelligent.

All in all, I think the member has brought forth a measure that definitely deserves discussion. I think we're all going to vote for it in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of Bill 58, brought forward by my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I know I speak for many in my riding when I say it's clearly time that regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act be updated to include classes of all-terrain vehicles not currently defined under provincial legislation, including side-by-side and two-up models.

Bill 58 would amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow two-up-style ATVs as well as side-by-side style UTVs to be legally driven on designated roads and trails in a similar manner to the way that all-terrain vehicles are considered. These vehicles are currently being utilized in the province and have been available for individual purchase for over a decade. It's time that the Ontario legislation is updated to include them.

It has been pointed out that despite a motion to this effect being passed by a government member in November 2013, there has been little action taken by the MTO on this regulatory change. That needs to change. This is something that makes sense in rural and northern Ontario, including in my riding of Nipissing.

I want to say that my friend Richard Woodward just sent me an email after he saw the motion pass last week from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He wants to see us address what he calls low-pressure tires. When it snows in the north, we swap out those tires with tracks. So the act should also include the word "tracks," specifically, to avoid any confusion. I want to say thanks to my friend Richard for passing that point on to us.

The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters has sent a letter to the Minister of Transportation to this effect with respect to the bill, and is calling on the revision of the Highway Traffic Act to include the currently undefined classes of off-road vehicles. In ATV clubs and trail organizations, members are also reaching out with calls for action.

The gap in the legislation makes it difficult for ATV clubs and trails associations, as users who prefer this newer class of vehicle and may be less inclined to purchase permits as they're not legally able to use the vehicles on public property. The limitations in the use of these off-road vehicles are not always made apparent when you go and purchase one of these vehicles.

In conclusion, let me say that other jurisdictions have embraced defining new classes of off-road vehicles. Quebec, for instance, allows them under similar regulation as traditional models and continues to benefit from tourism on public trail systems. Surely we can look at the Quebec example and make this work here in Ontario.

This is a good bill. We can do this in Ontario. It makes sense. I ask all my colleagues, especially those who backed the November 2013 motion and the motion last week from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane to vote in favour of Bill 58 today so we can move this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate?

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I was ready to move ahead.

Mr. Bill Walker: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. I spent days on this.

I'd like to acknowledge my colleague Norm Miller, from Parry Sound–Muskoka, for bringing Bill 58 together to finish the work that sadly was never completed by this Liberal government.

It's a pleasure to stand in support of updating regulation 316/03; namely, to include new classes of off-road vehicle that have four or more wheels, including side-by-side and two-up models. As I reminded the House just last week when I spoke in support of my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane's private member's bill, it was

back in 2013 that this House voted unanimously to do just that, and then they didn't: another broken promise. I hope the new Minister of Transportation supports outdoor enthusiasts more. Despite the fact that this is a billion-dollar industry that supports job creation and tourism, outdoor enthusiasts have not been treated very well by this government.

Most importantly, Bill 58 is about safety and accessibility. This amendment will improve people's safety on the road and allow people who have legally been riding an ATV to legally ride a UTV. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem that complicated. I can't understand why anybody on that side of the House is going to object to something that's going to give people the same right they enjoy today, but just on a different vehicle. In fact, it extends the ability of people, particularly as they get older or have mobility problems getting on an ATV, to ride in a UTV.

As debated last week, the side-by-side is popular among families because of its size, and it's especially popular among people with disabilities. I hope this minister will be mindful of his duty to protect all road users.

My riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is home to ATV enthusiasts, anglers, hunters, farmers and cottagers, both residents and tourists. It's a recreation and leisure industry, and it's used for work purposes. I must say that there are a lot of people who come to our great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound from urban areas to enjoy the outdoor environment, and I think that's wonderful.

In Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, we have three such clubs: the South Bruce Peninsula ATV Club, the Dufferin Grey ATV Club and the Huron Shores ATV Club. Of course, the Dufferin Grey is also served by my colleague Sylvia Jones from Dufferin-Caledon—and my colleague Lisa Thompson from Huron-Bruce. We have the Haliburton ATV Association and the Kawartha ATV Association, represented wonderfully by my colleague Laurie Scott from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Of course, I have to mention Argo vehicles, which are produced in the riding of my good colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the government and the Minister of Transportation to support my colleague's bill and help get this change made swiftly. We in this House have all agreed a couple of times already. All they have to do is change and have a willingness to move it forward. This province has thousands of kilometres of breathtaking trail networks. Let the people use them without fear of breaking the law.

Mr. Speaker, I need to also mention that this still requires enabling legislation by municipalities. If they want to use the argument about safety, the municipalities will still monitor and regulate that to ensure it is safe.

It is a critical thing. We have farmers who have to go from one piece of property to another, and they use these types of vehicles. There are people who drive from the city to a cottage and may need this to get to the trail system they have. It's all about providing access and providing enjoyment and the leisure of the outdoors.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sorry?

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: People with disabilities—absolutely mindful of those. That's one of the key things. I can't believe there would be any one of the 107 of us here who would vote against this and deny someone with a disability the ability to be in the great outdoors, to enjoy the great environment we have in the great province of Ontario.

I certainly hope that the minister will take this and heed. I hope every member across the aisle will see that this has been agreed upon unanimously by three parties before. In fact, one of their own members brought a very similar bill that they agreed to and did not bring that in. I hope that this time they'll acknowledge the great work of my colleague Norm Miller and help enthusiasts to be able to ride these legally in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now call on the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to all the members who spoke to Bill 58: the members from Timmins-James Bay, Northumberland-Quinte West, Leeds-Grenville, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Mississauga-Streetsville, Nipissing and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I did want to get on the record as well that I have received support from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, who represent thousands of people who like to get out into the bush in our rural areas.

1540

Greg Farrant wrote, "The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is pleased to support Bill 58, Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act." He goes on to say, "The current regulations are badly outdated and not reflective of the increased numbers, use and popularity of ORVs including side-by-sides, two-ups and utility vehicles and the need to provide for the expanded use of these vehicles on roads." I'm glad to have that support, Mr. Speaker.

I note—I actually gave the member from Oakville the information for MTO, which is soliciting input from people interested in side-by-sides and UTVs. So, I would encourage people—I assume it's available on the MTO website—to give input and answer the various questions they have, in the hope that this will move the government forward.

As mentioned, there has been a motion from a Liberal member, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has a different way of approaching the same issue, and now I have this private member's bill. It would be nice to see the government actually move on it. I would suggest that before April 13, which is the end date for giving input, people go to the MTO website and make comments and let them know this is an important issue for people across Ontario. I thank members for their support today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

RAISE A GLASS
TO ONTARIO ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015 POUR PORTER
UN TOAST À L'ONTARIO

Mr. Smith moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 67, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act /
Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's an honour to rise today to speak to the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act.

When I was first a candidate, back in the 2011 election, I went into Prince Edward county and met with several winery owners there. They highlighted a couple of different things for me, Speaker.

First, they felt they didn't have access to the retail market that was necessary for the industry to grow. Second, they felt that regulations around the transportation of their product were ridiculously out of date.

Many of the people I met on that trip to the county have remained friends and valuable sources of information ever since, whether it was Caroline Granger, from the Grange of Prince Edward County; Lanny Huff, from Huff Estates; or Richard Karlo, from Karlo Estates.

I was thinking about this in my office just the other day: If I had to do one thing over again, I might change the name of this act. Many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, I've gotten to my feet and taken a poke at the government for introducing bills with great names that really don't do much. I wanted to introduce a bill with a great name that actually did something. If this bill gets to committee, Mr. Speaker, I think I might amend one thing, and that would be the name.

You see, my friend Richard Karlo lost his battle with cancer last year. Within two years of opening Karlo Estates, he made that winery profitable in Prince Edward county, something that is almost unheard of when we talk about the wine industry. My heart goes out to his wife, Sherry Martin, as well.

Rick's wines made it to the wine list at the Royal York hotel and the Toronto International Film Festival. He fought the LCBO's Cellared in Canada labelling, which would have given a marketing advantage to wines where up to 99% of the grapes harvested for a particular wine could be grown outside of Canada.

Last year, after we lost the election, I went into my office, and there was an email from Richard. He had watched the results come in. He told me to keep my chin up, and he said, "You should think about running for the party"—advice that was indicative of the incomparable King Richard I met in 2011, described in the National Post as the Indiana Jones of the Ontario wine industry.

I didn't take his advice, Mr. Speaker, and here we are today.

I know it is strange to lead off a discussion of your own bill by talking about one thing you might like to

change. But I think this bill should probably be called the Richard Karlo act.

That having been said, there is a lot packed into this bill that would help the beverage alcohol industry in this province grow and create more jobs. I think we all want that.

In 2014, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario conducted a report to review the regulatory regime surrounding beverage alcohol in Ontario. In that report, the AGCO looked at a number of regulatory changes put forth by proponents seeking to make changes to the way our growing beverage alcohol industry does business.

Back when I used to call OHL games, there used to be a rule of thumb for an Ontario Hockey League franchise. One third of the franchises made money, one third broke even and the final third lost money. I sat down with the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association over the recess this winter and was told that the reality for Ontario Hockey League clubs isn't all that different for winegrowers either. The bigger operations seem to make some money—some of them actually make a lot of money—and the more medium-sized wineries with strong regional presence do a little better than breaking even, but for many vintners in Ontario their winery is quite literally a labour of love.

I hear from those people all the time that they do it because they love it, not because they're getting rich. Their profits are their vintages at the end of the day. Many of them labour for years to produce a great pinot noir or an award-winning chardonnay. The question has to be: How can we make it possible for some of these great Ontario products to end up in the hands of Ontario customers, either at special events or at restaurants across the province?

One way is to loosen some of the transportation regulations regarding the delivery of alcohol. As the AGCO report itself states, "It was therefore suggested that the relevant regulation should be amended to permit liquor delivery services to offer their services to business customers." Presently, if the Grange of Prince Edward, which is a great winery, is making a delivery of product on a truck that is half-full, it can't pick up products from other wineries or pick up products from the craft distillery in Prince Edward county and drop it off at the same point, which seems ludicrous to me. The two companies must contract the vehicle of a third-party company to do this.

Wineries in particular in the county are used to working together because they have the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association. If one were to deliver to a restaurant in Belleville, Kingston or Ottawa, delivering alongside other wineries or the County Cider Co., which has the great Waupoos Cider, they are right now forbidden by regulation if those products are on the same vehicle. It just doesn't make any sense.

As the AGCO also states, the existing regulation with direct delivery to licensees already causes problems and a decrease in business for the producers. When I go to a

restaurant here in Toronto and I want to order wine, I usually have a choice between maybe one or two—maybe three—of the wineries from Prince Edward county. I might be able to order a Huff's; I might be able to order a Sandbanks or a Casa-Dea or maybe a Karlo. But we have so many other great wineries in Prince Edward county whose access to market is being inhibited by the current structure and the current set-up.

That brings me to the second major facet of the bill, which is cross-selling. To quote once again from the government's own AGCO report, proposals include "allowing breweries to sell the beer of other beer manufacturers at their on-site brewery retail stores," which they call "cross-selling." Recently in this province, we've had an ongoing discussion about the retail sale of beer. It has been a hot topic.

Right now, if you want to buy a beer in Ontario, you have three options. You can buy it at the Beer Store, the LCBO or on the site where it's brewed. That's it—the retail store at the on-brewery site. If you're a craft brewer in this province, that means that the only retail options outside of your brewery are controlled by either the government or your major competitors. No other product has this type of retail environment that is this constrained, and that's a shame.

We've seen a boom in craft beer growth in the United States, in states like New York and Oregon. The number of craft breweries there has taken off, and they're not just making great beer; they're creating jobs in those states. But here in Ontario, once again, the transportation and retailing regulations make it hard to grow a business. I can order almost any great Ontario craft beer here in Toronto or buy it at the LCBO, but back home at Earl and Angelo's steakhouse in downtown Belleville or at the Waring House in Picton, you'd be lucky to find options much beyond a Steam Whistle or a Mill Street if you're looking for a craft beer—not that there's anything wrong with those products; they're great, but there are so many others out there that we should be opening the market up to.

Last summer I was having a barbecue with some friends and I wanted to stock up on some Twice as Mad Tom, which is a great craft beer from Muskoka. You can find it here in Toronto. Within a half-hour drive of my house, in the Stirling area, there are eight LCBOs and there are four Beer Stores. Do you think I could find Twice as Mad Tom at any of those stores? No, I couldn't.

1550

Under this bill, Barley Days Brewery, which is in my riding in the Picton area, would be able, as a member of the Ontario craft beer association, to stock Muskoka products at their onsite brewery store. Effectively, this would turn these stores from showrooms for a single label into small, private craft beer stores across the province. It would allow wineries and distilleries to do the same thing, if they so choose. The AGCO report noted that small brewers in particular would welcome this opportunity.

The final piece is the introduction of a warehousing system outside of the current LCBO system. If we're

going to loosen the direct delivery regulations to allow businesses to expand, we have to be serious about it.

If you're a brewer in Kitchener or a winery on the south coast, say, in Norfolk or Essex counties, but you've got a licensee in Ottawa or Sudbury interested in your product, same-day service is pretty much logistically impossible.

However, if you or the manufacturers' association to which you belong have licensed and bonded warehouse spaces available, you have the ability to not only expand but grow province-wide as a brand if you can meet the demand. That's the kind of market we should be establishing for Ontario-grown products.

There's a winery in Prince Edward county called Casa-Dea Estates. My friend Paul Marconi runs that winery.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yay.

Mr. Todd Smith: You know Paul; he's a good guy.

It's near Wellington. Thanks to changes in legislation last year—the government made some changes—Paul is now able to showcase his wares at the farmers' market at the ByWard in Ottawa on weekends.

But here's the ridiculousness of the rest of that story, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to stick around after the Saturday sale and sell again on Sunday, he has to pack up his bottles of wine, and he has to drive all the way back to his winery in Wellington and then drive back to Ottawa the next morning to sell again. If he tried to store his wine overnight in his truck or in his van, he'd be violating the Liquor Control Act. That's how out of date our alcohol regulations are in the province of Ontario.

I hope the members of the House will support this bill, help me modernize regulations that are holding back some great Ontario businesses, and open up consumer choice for Ontarians. There's so much opportunity here, Mr. Speaker.

The craft brewers are behind this. They want this. They want to be able to cross-sell their products. The Prince Edward county wineries and those in Niagara, the wine growers' association of Ontario—they're behind it. The Wine Council of Ontario is behind this. The wine council would love to see this happen.

In Prince Edward county, when you travel over the Norris Whitney Bridge from Belleville into the county—as I say, there are 40 different wineries there. Tourists are coming from Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto. They're coming from the Quinte region to go into Prince Edward county. There are 40 wineries. They might only have time in the day to hit three, four or five of those wineries, but they might like the opportunity to sample products from other wineries that they're unable to get to because their vacation just isn't that long.

This would give them the opportunity to have Prince Edward county boutique wineries, where they could sell products from their competitors. They could bring in products from Niagara. They could bring in products from Norfolk and from Essex—down in Pelee Island.

It's time to make some changes; they're long overdue. Free our suds and raise a glass to Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say at the outset that I'll be voting against this bill, but I want to congratulate the member on one point: He's trying to bring forward an issue that he believes in, and that's what PMBs are all about. Sometimes we're going to agree; sometimes we're going to disagree. On this particular one, I think we're going to part company and disagree.

I just want to very quickly go through what I think is part of the problem here. Should we be finding ways for craft brewers, vintners and spirit-makers to find other ways to be able to increase their sales and have a better opportunity to sell? Absolutely. I think there are things that we've done, and I think there are things that can be done, in order to make that happen.

But I do believe that the LCBO is the premier flagship, I would say, almost worldwide of the places that I've seen where we have the sale of alcohol. Where you have the LCBO, which is the only agency that sells all those spirits, wines and beers in a government store, we're able to make sure that we have a great selection. We're able to make sure that it is safe. We're able to make sure that we're not selling to minors, and that if we're going to be in a position where we sell alcohol to our citizens, we do it in a responsible way.

I worry about a system where we're going to introduce a concept of having more people sell alcohol, beer and spirits in private stores across Ontario as one of the issues—

Mr. Todd Smith: We're not.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I respect that the member has brought this forward. I do believe he truly believes in what he's doing as being the right thing. I commend you for that. I think it's important that you bring this here for debate, but this is part of the debate.

I think there is a problem, however, in introducing that concept of having more outlets to sell spirits, wines and beers by private operators across Ontario. It increases the risk for other people who are under-age to purchase alcohol. I think there will be some responsible ones. I think most people are responsible and want to do the right thing. I'm sure there would be some who would be, but, quite frankly, I think it's a bit problematic.

The larger issue is, why would we try to break up essentially what is a good system that we have currently today with the LCBO? They're very well organized. They have a huge selection when it comes to product. It's not as if we're without the ability to find a store somewhere in Ontario to buy those products we want to buy. But at the same time, it is an opportunity for the province to generate much-needed revenue that we don't have to take by way of additional taxation. If we decided that we wanted to diminish their market share by going in this direction, and that's ultimately what would happen, it really means to say we're undercutting ourselves as a province, or we'd have to increase the taxes on the products that are sold privately in order to make up the

difference, which would mean that consumers potentially could end up paying more.

For a number of reasons, I just want to say up front that I will be voting against this, and I assume the members of our caucus will do the same for reasons that are going to be put on the record a little bit later by my good friend the member from Toronto—Danforth, Mr. Tabuns, who will speak to this as well.

I also just want to say that I think the one thing the LCBO has done well over the last while is that they've been really good at allowing new products to go into their stores and to get shelf space in order to sell. I'll just give you one as an example. There is a Monsieur Rheault who lives in Hearst. He is the owner of a company that makes Loon Vodka.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member puts up his thumb and says, "Fantastic." This individual entrepreneur in Hearst, Ontario, decided that he wanted to get into the business of making vodka. He went out and learned how to make what is called milk vodka. It's a very special vodka that not a lot of people know how to make; it's a bit of a secret recipe. This guy learned to do it from the masters, by observing, by studying, by doing things. And guess what? He is now producing the number one worldwide, Loon Vodka. His Loon Vodka is known to be the best in the world.

I encourage anybody who walks into a liquor store in Ontario, because I saw it at my corner store—I call it my corner store, the LCBO store down at the Atrium on Bay. We all know the one by the subway station. Loon Vodka is prominently displayed at that particular store. It's right next to the—what's the other big one?

Interjection: Grey Goose.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Grey Goose Vodka. But I ask people to really try this Loon Vodka. It is an amazing vodka, very smooth, especially good when it's freezing cold in the freezer.

But my point is this: He met with the LCBO, he proved his product with the LCBO, and the LCBO now has it on the shelves across the province of Ontario. In Aurora, in Timmins, in Kapuskasing and Welland, people have seen it. So my point is, he has a larger market share by selling through the LCBO to be able to sustain his business. Imagine if he couldn't get that market share through the LCBO and had to set up his own store somewhere. He would have a very limited market to sell his Loon Vodka. So let's also understand that the LCBO, if properly run, provides producers a better opportunity to sell their products.

If we can do things better in the LCBO, let's hear what those are and let's see what we could do in order to make the LCBO an even greater success than it is today.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for this time in the debate.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'll be sharing my time with the Chair of the Cabinet later on.

I want to congratulate the member for Prince Edward–Hastings for bringing forward a very good bill; I think it is. I'm going to be looking forward to the debate and eventually seeing this bill go through committee for further review. But I think the fundamental principles of what the member for Prince Edward–Hastings is trying to achieve are things that I certainly support, and I think many people on this side of the House would support.

The notion that this is to simply create a parallel retail distribution network, as the member for Timmins–James Bay said, misses the point. I think what the member for Prince Edward–Hastings is trying to get to is that this is about creating not just new outlets for the sale of beer, wine and spirits for producers, but it's about creating those experiences that visitors—whether they're Ontario visitors to another region of Ontario or tourists from outside of Ontario—seek to have by sampling different wines, sampling different beers and different brew products. So I think this notion about being able to introduce more ability to cross-pollinate the craft brewer industry, the winery industry, is an excellent notion. I think that's certainly very consistent with some of the review that the government has been undertaking through the council on review of government assets, which is not just looking at how to realize more revenue for the government, but to modernize how we do things.

Certainly, in terms of Etobicoke–Lakeshore—unfortunately, I don't have any wineries in my riding, but I have three fabulous craft brewers: Great Lakes Brewery, Cool Beer and Black Oak. Over the last few weeks during the break, I took it upon myself to visit these three establishments, talk to them, see their operations and ask them how they think the current system is working. I may have also sampled some of their products along the way.

What's clear from that is their ability to work together in a community would be enhanced and that would create a better experience for consumers as well as for the manufacturers. I don't think it would take away from the ability of a well-managed, government-run institution like the LCBO to continue to thrive. I think what it would actually do is it would create more economic activity. I think it would create more jobs, more sales and more tax revenues. Tax revenues flow to the government and benefit the residents of Ontario ultimately. I think from that perspective, this is something that we should be looking at.

As I mentioned, the review that Mr. Clark is doing for us through the council on government assets is looking at how we could improve the sale of beer in this province, looking at ways that we could maximize the revenues from the sale of beer, alcohol and spirits. That kind of work: looking at some simple things like whether you sell six-packs or 12-packs or even two-fours in liquor stores or maybe allow some other retail outlets to sell brewed products. These are the kinds of innovative ideas this government is looking at. When a member of the official opposition comes up with good ideas, I applaud him. I will be supporting this at this stage and I would urge my colleagues to do so as well.

We talk a great deal in this House about wanting to create a better economic climate in this province, and I can think of no better way than taking steps that encourage the entrepreneurs, those who create the vast majority of jobs in this province, to make their lives a little bit easier and at the same time make this province a little bit more fun to live in and more fun to visit. I think these types of measures would assist that.

Certainly when we do that, then we will see the economic growth. We will see the growth in tax revenues. We will see that support for this government's ability to pay for our 10-year, \$130-billion infrastructure plan, for the \$29 billion that we want to invest in public transit, roads, bridges and transportation infrastructure throughout the province so that those very entrepreneurs who have product to move in this province will be able to move it more effectively and so that the tourists who want to go and visit these wonderful establishments throughout the province will be able to get to them more easily and more safely.

I say to the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, I raise a glass to your bill, and I look forward to the rest of the debate. Cheers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm happy to rise and speak on this bill to support my colleague here. It will only be for a few minutes. There's quite a few of our members who do want to say a few words on this great bill that has been brought forward by the member Todd Smith.

I've been dealing with one of the craft brewers in my riding, Railway City brewery, which often wins one of the best beer awards at the annual event held here for craft beer at the Legislature with their Dead Elephant Ale. This bill actually addresses quite a few of the concerns that they've been asking about for a number of years. Being able to cross-sell their brew with other breweries throughout the province, in addition to being able to transport their beer throughout the province and sharing the load with other breweries, will not only decrease their costs but also enhance their ability to grow and, at the end of the day, create more jobs. I think that's really what Ontario needs now. Craft brewers of this province are one of the leading job creators in the marketplace, and they only continue to grow as craft brewers grow.

Speaker, I have Railway City brewery in my riding, which I truly do support. I just have to make mention of two brews that they do special limited editions of that I really enjoy. The Witty Traveller they come out with during the summertime—you can only get it in the summer. It's a great way to cool your thirst during the summer. Also, during Christmastime, the Cranberry Festive Lager is made with their southern rail line beer, and throw a little cranberry in it. It's probably one of the best-tasting Christmas beers I've ever had. In fact, I still have a bunch left in my fridge that I hope to enjoy later on this year.

But I do have to mention that we do have a couple of wineries in my riding that I'm quite proud of: The

Carolinian winery, which is out in Thorndale, they just purchased Rush Creek winery near Aylmer, and they do fruit wines, which is really good. Of course, we have Quai du Vin. It's a long-time winery just outside St. Thomas on Fruitridge Line. Jamie Quai is now running it. I think this will be an added benefit to them, especially with the transportation of their product to other areas throughout the province. When you can decrease the costs that these wineries and breweries have in their business, they're going to expand, they're going to grow, and it's going to be a plus for Ontario. It's not going to affect the LCBO at all. I don't know what the NDP is talking about. However, what it's going to do is grow business in this province, and that's what we need to focus on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to discuss this bill today, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay credited Mr. Smith for bringing this bill in. I think he is credibly, reliably, representing the perspective of his party. Having talked with him before, I have no doubt that he honestly sees this as a way to move forward the sale of liquor, wine and beer. I actually disagree with him, but I also think that he's being authentic and honest in what he's doing.

I note, having talked to some of my colleagues from the Niagara region, that the Winery and Grower Alliance of Ontario hasn't been consulted on this. We checked with them today—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, they tell us they haven't been consulted, and this is a matter that would not be in their top 10 list of things to be done. The Niagara grape growers are opposed and also said they had not been consulted. The Wine Council of Ontario has said today that they weren't consulted and didn't know about the bill. So I'm a bit surprised that that sort of groundwork hadn't been done.

Speaker, at the heart of it, this is a bill about privatization of liquor, wine and beer sales in Ontario. That's what this bill does. It's not sort of at the core of it. It's not sort of hidden anywhere. It's really straightforward. If you manufacture spirits, if you ferment wine, if you ferment beer, you're going to be able to sell products and sell products that everyone else produces, as well. This is a privatization initiative. I'm surprised to see that the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore is in support of this bill, because my understanding has been that the Liberals have understood, to some extent, the importance of keeping the LCBO in public hands, the importance of that revenue for our health care services, for education.

1610

The reality, Speaker, is that people in this province don't want privatization. They don't want privatization of the LCBO. They don't want privatization of their electricity systems. We went through this debate about five years ago when Dwight Duncan and Dalton McGuinty

hired Goldman Sachs—those wonderful financiers, those geniuses behind the Greek economic miracle—to ask them how to privatize OLG, LCBO, OPG. In the end, Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan, in a majority government situation, realized that, politically, it was a total loser, and they dumped it.

In this province, we hear constantly about the need for funding for education, about the shortfalls in funding for education. We had nurses filling this chamber this morning, desperate for recognition of their wages, desperate for investment in health care, desperate for equity between those who work in hospitals and those who work in communities. Where will that money come from?

This is a government that has been cutting corporate taxes for a decade. This is a government that has been saying, "We need all these services, but we don't have the money to provide them." Why on earth would this government vote for a bill that would undermine the very sources of revenue that we need to provide the services to a modern society that has a chance of competing in this global economy?

Mr. Speaker, look at some of our experiences with privatization in this province. The Conservatives started the privatization of the electricity system. At the end of the 1990s, that program rolled out under their jurisdiction till about 2003, and then that program was carried forward on a piecemeal basis by the Liberals. What has come with it? Soaring prices for electricity. An undermining of our economy. Hardship for families who are trying to keep the lights on and keep themselves warm, and in the summer, obviously, keep themselves cool. People finding that their household budgets are stretched to the limit. Why? Because this government decided that privatization was a good thing. They didn't do it overtly the way the Tories did. They did it silently, a piece at a time. But in the end, the effect is the same: a huge rise in prices, a reduction in the standard of living. This bill continues that kind of thinking.

The Auditor General's most recent report noted that this government, through its commitment to public-private partnerships—the privatization of public infrastructure—had wasted \$8 billion. Eight billion dollars is a lot of money. You can build a lot of hospitals. You can repair a lot of schools. You can hire a lot of child care workers. You can put people in place to help children with special education. When you privatize public services, when you privatize public agencies that make money that we use for services, then ultimately those services are cut.

Speaker, this bill represents an honest expression of Conservative ideology. Fair enough. I don't think that's an approach that's actually going to allow this province to grow. It's an approach that will undermine our services. Frankly, it's an approach that the Liberals, who speak for services, should be opposing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to address the last remarks about privatization. I'm looking at the April 1, 1995, Kitchener-Waterloo Record, where it says,

"The Ontario government is asking the private sector to help build and pay for two more sections of the new toll highway north of Toronto." That's the 407. The Financial Post, June 24, says, "Not even the Ontario NDP government could resist the logic of contracting out: The new Highway 407 to the north of Toronto is being built and will be operated by a private consortium under government contract."

My friend from Timmins—James Bay was there. I thought the NDP was always opposed to privatization. That has nothing to do with this bill, but I did hear the member for Toronto—Danforth, one of my favourite NDP members—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I respect the dean of the Legislature. However, I would ask you to listen to what his speech is about and have him speak on this private member's bill. This is a very important private member's bill by my member, and I think we need to stick to that topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank you for your point of order, but the previous speaker did start out with privatization. I think he was making that reference, so I will allow him.

Proceed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Privatization is included in the discussion of this bill.

The government of the day, back in 1995, "also announced today that the province will seek private-sector partners to accelerate planning and design of Highway 407."

"The 407 East is an ideal opportunity to have a new look at what it takes for the private sector to finance a highway."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I hope you will tie it into the bill quickly.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is the NDP, who are always saying that others want to privatize. I digress only because the member mentioned that, first of all. That was the road to privatization.

Back to the bill—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know it's annoying, the member for Hamilton Mountain, but I did do research that shows who started the privatization. I know; I would be embarrassed as well, but that happens.

Back to this bill. We appreciate what the member for Timmins—James Bay had to say about the fact that you've raised an issue, at the very least. That's good, when these issues are raised and discussed. I happen to think that the LCBO as it exists today has improved vastly over the years. The days when you had to, they tell me, fill out a form and come out with a bottle wrapped up in a brown paper—that's gone. Now there are—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hear the member for Brockville disparaging the name of Gerry Lougheed, who, by the way, has raised more money for charity—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Watch for leadership candidates in your party—than most people in the Sudbury area have ever seen. But that has nothing to do with the bill either.

I do want to say that the bill allows us to discuss some of these issues. If you were to check with the Grape Growers of Ontario, you would find that they would have appreciated a widespread consultation on this particular bill before it was brought forward, because they have some concerns about the contents of this bill.

I have some concerns about it. Monsieur Bisson mentioned that the LCBO has improved its footprint, its store, its ability to take on new product over the years, and there's still more to be done in that case. Nobody has mentioned the Beer Store yet because they're all afraid to mention the Beer Store, I think. No one has mentioned that.

There's a discussion going on now. Mr. Ed Clark is doing an evaluation of government assets and is going to be making some recommendations. The member is contributing to that general debate, and I want to give him credit for contributing to that general debate.

One of the things we'd be concerned about is if, in the provisions of this bill, foreign product would be available at the sites he's talking about. It mentions that a manufacturer of beer or cider, spirits or wine may sell, in stores it owns and operates, its own spirits and wine as well as that of other manufacturers of the same type of liquor. That makes me say: Does that mean wine from France? Does that mean wine from South Africa? Does that mean wine from Chile? How does that advance the case for us?

1620

I'm a person who encourages private members to bring these forward. I hate seeing private members' bills defeated in the House, because they should be allowed, for the most part, unless they're very egregious, to move forward to committee, where there's some more detailed analysis.

You've heard my speeches recently on the importance of committees and getting things to committee so that we can have those discussions, have people with some expertise making representations to the committee, having input, having members of the Legislature have the opportunity to put forward amendments that may strengthen or change a bill in such a way as to make it more acceptable to all.

Though I have many apprehensions about the provisions of this bill, I don't want to discourage the member from ever bringing forward any further bills because the door was shut in his face today. I do encourage him very much to continue to bring forward bills for debate in this Legislature that will have a good topic before us for discussion.

I relate the fact that the Grape Growers of Ontario are very apprehensive about this bill, and I don't blame them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 67, which the member has named the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings mentioned in his opening comments that it's all about jobs. I'm very pleased that in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka we have four craft breweries now, the biggest being Muskoka Brewery, as well as Lake of Bays brewery, the Highlander brewery in South River, and Sawdust City in Gravenhurst. They make some great beers.

I think about the jobs part of his talk. When I toured Muskoka Brewery for the first time, I think they had about 65 employees at that point. They said, "We're not efficient. We hire a lot of people." At that point, they were in an old co-op building in downtown Bracebridge which was a good retail outlet as well, but because they grew so much—they've doubled and doubled their output—they actually moved into the old Alcan plant in Bracebridge, which was a much more efficient operation for producing the beer.

The crazy part about the rules in Ontario is that they had to give up their retail outlet in downtown Bracebridge—a much better place for people actually looking to buy beer because the rules say that you can only sell the brew where you make it. The Alcan plant is kind of out in the country and not really a place that people would necessarily be driving by unless they went looking for it. This just doesn't make sense at all. You'd think they should be able to have both locations.

This bill goes to freeing up some of these crazy rules that we have to make it a little more convenient for people and enable some of our businesses to grow and create more jobs. I certainly think that's a positive thing.

I've had the pleasure of spending a little bit of time as a tourist in Prince Edward county. I went there one year around Victoria Day weekend, kayaking and cycling, and had the pleasure of seeing how the vineyards have developed there. I can see why he has brought this bill forward, because it seemed like 15 years ago there were no vineyards and now they're everywhere around Prince Edward county. It was a great experience having the opportunity to go kayaking in the morning and then cycling from vineyard to vineyard in the afternoon. But as he pointed out, you don't get too far on a bicycle, so it would be nice to be able to buy more than one brand of wine produced, which his bill would allow.

I'm very pleased that he has brought this bill forward and I look forward to supporting it. I think it is time to look at the rules that we have in the province of Ontario from the perspective of the producers and also from the perspective of the consumer as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to rise and speak in support of my PC colleague's private member's bill. This bill will help modernize Ontario's alcohol beverage sector. My PC colleague is reintroducing this great private member's bill, after it previously died on the order paper in the spring. This bill will absolutely help

clear up some red tape that stands in the way of Ontario wineries, craft brewers, distilleries and cideries, to allow them more options to distribute and sell their products.

Dufferin-Caledon is home to Chesslawn Vineyard and Winery, Downey's Estate Winery and Adamo Estate Winery.

Ontario cider is also well represented in my riding: Spirit Tree Estate Cider and Southern Cliff Brands, which produces Pommies cider, call Dufferin-Caledon home. Both cideries competed in the ninth annual Great Lakes International Cider and Perry Competition, in which Southern Cliff Brands brought home a bronze and a silver medal in the New World cider category. In addition, Spirit Tree Estate Cider brought home a silver medal in the specialty cider and perry category.

Speaker, I applaud my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings for bringing forward this bill that will help our Ontario wineries, brewers, distilleries and cideries. Instead of holding back our local producers, who, in most cases, are using 100% Ontario-grown fruit in their products, we should actually be trying to help them and encourage that support.

I support my colleague's private member's bill and hope to see it passed without further delay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on behalf of my colleague's Bill 67, the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act.

I recently spoke to Still Waters Distillery, which is in Concord, maybe a five- or 10-minute drive from my constituency office in the riding of Thornhill, and it seems like an interesting place. They invited me to come for a tour, and I'm looking forward to that. The owners are two gentlemen named Barry: Barry Bernstein and Barry Stein. I don't know how they keep that straight, but I'll do my best to keep it straight.

I spoke to one of the Barrys, and he made some comments to me, but first I want to just let you know a little bit about them. You can visit their website at stillwatersdistillery.com. They have a small operation, just a few employees, but they would love to grow. In 2013, they won a Canadian Whisky Award of Excellence. They do their best to buy locally grown grain, within a hundred-kilometre radius, and they certainly always buy Canadian grain. They're in Concord, Ontario, which is such a nice little community. They have a range of handmade spirits.

One of the Barrys told me that their biggest issue is that spirits are treated differently than beer and wine. I think we have to look at the fact that so many people are crossing the border. Most Canadians live within the border and they cross over the border. So often, when we're travelling, we see people buying alcohol at Duty Free, and what a shame that is when we have so many locally produced beers, wines and spirits. Basically, taxation is extremely high for spirits—it's a smaller taxation for beer and wine—and I think that really limits the growth of these products.

I think we shouldn't kid ourselves. The Pan Am Games, we all know, are going to bring a lot of parties

and partying—hopefully, safe partying—to the GTA and surrounding municipalities. Wouldn't it be nice if we could showcase some of our craft breweries, micro-breweries and craft distilleries while all those tourists and visitors were coming here? I think it's a shame if we can't.

I think the LCBO does the best job that it can within its mandate, but I think that we could do so much better and do so much more. We don't have to all be cookie cutters in every industry. We can be a little more creative. We're Canadians, and we deserve that.

Right now, the Canadian spirit industry is almost completely foreign-owned, and I would certainly like to see that changed. We should be encouraging our own business owners to sell directly, to increase their profits and to increase their number of employees. We were talking earlier today about pension plans, and we all know that the best way to save for retirement is to have a great job. We're really limiting this fantastic industry. We need to really focus on what we can do to expand this market rather than shutting it down.

1630

I think that we should have all-party support for this bill. I think we should let businesses move forward with less red tape, less restrictions. I think some of the restrictions—maybe they had a good reason for putting them in. I certainly can't imagine why different distilleries can't share shipping costs and share trucks. We hear often from the Minister of the Environment about being more environmentally conscious. Making them take their product home, drive it home, and then drive it back again the next day for the rest of a fair or a show is certainly not in the best interests of our roads, our environment and our gridlock.

I think that we should all raise a glass in memory of your friend, who you were thinking of renaming the bill after. As we say in Thornhill, L'Chayim. Drink and drive responsibly. We'll end on that note.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, you now have two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to thank all of those who chimed in on the debate here this afternoon: my colleagues from Thornhill and Dufferin–Caledon as well as Elgin–Middlesex–London and Parry Sound–Muskoka, and the members from the government side.

The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore was very supportive of the bill. The meandering ways of our minister from St. Catharines—sometimes it's hard to find exactly what his message is, but I appreciate him speaking on the bill this afternoon as well.

To the members of the third party from Toronto–Danforth and Timmins–James Bay: I just want to clarify a couple of things for the members of the third party. There was some concern about the fact that this was going to somehow create new outlets for alcohol sale. That's not the case at all. What this bill would do is allow the cross-selling of products in other retail stores that

already exist on-site, so there would be no new points of sale across the province. We would essentially be creating 40 mini craft beer stores across the province. There would be no new retail outlets created as a result of this bill.

And I did consult. As I mentioned earlier, I've been working on this bill for three years now, Mr. Speaker. I'm really happy I was able to debate it here this afternoon. We have had extensive consultation on this bill for the last three years with the Grape Growers of Ontario, the Prince Edward County Winegrowers Association, the WGAO, the Wine Council of Ontario, the craft brewers, the Beer Store, the national brewers and Spirits Canada. Not all of those organizations or associations were supportive of this bill. But this is something that is needed for the medium-sized and smaller brewers, distillers, wineries and cideries in Ontario. They need more access to market.

It has been overwhelming that the public wants this as well. They want to see an expanded retail sector for our alcohol distribution. While this doesn't create any new points of sale, this does have the potential to create hundreds more jobs, if not thousands of jobs, in this sector.

I appreciate everybody's contribution to the debate here this afternoon, and I hope that you'll support me and raise a glass to Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AMENDMENT ACT (VOTING HOURS EXTENSION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ÉLECTIONS MUNICIPALES (PROLONGATION DES HEURES DE SCRUTIN)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 28, standing in the name of Mr. Berardinetti.

Mr. Berardinetti has moved second reading of Bill 68, An Act to amend the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 to keep voting places open until 9 p.m.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to send the bill to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Agreed? So moved.

UTILITY TASK AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES AUTOQUADS ET LES VÉHICULES POLYVALENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 58, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Norm Miller: The Legislative Assembly committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee. Agreed? So moved.

RAISE A GLASS TO ONTARIO ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR PORTER UN TOAST À L'ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a whole lot of noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute vote.

The division bells rang from 1635 to 1640.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Members take their seats, please.

Mr. Smith has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Clark, Steve
Damerla, Dipika
Dickson, Joe
Fedeli, Victor
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit

Martow, Gila
McMahon, Eleanor
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq

Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wong, Soo
Yurek, Jeff

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Fife, Catherine

Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter

Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 23; the nays are 10.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mr. Todd Smith: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, SCOFEA.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned February 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm honoured today, as I am every day that I have the opportunity to stand in this fine chamber and speak on behalf of my constituents in my riding of Oshawa.

Today it is my distinct pleasure to rise to discuss Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other acts. It is also referred to as the Agriculture Insurance Act.

My remarks follow in the footsteps of the always illuminating member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who also serves as our party's critic for agriculture, food and rural affairs. In this role he delivered impassioned and poignant remarks on this bill prior to the Legislature break in December, and as a lifelong farmer, his remarks are insightful and immensely valuable.

As members of provincial Parliament, we have the opportunity to learn about and speak about such a vast array of topics and subjects, and consequently we often call on the expertise of others to form what we hope are balanced and well-reasoned positions. But on that day, it was especially exciting to watch my colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane speak not just on an academic level but on a personal level about a topic

that he has not only learned, but lived. For that, I thank him and hope to echo some of his sentiments here today.

In that vein, I would like to begin by restating a brief passage of his speech that I feel encapsulates a concern that we, as members, hear far too often from our constituents. Speaker, what this legislation does is that “it changes words so that this could happen. It changes it from the Crop Insurance Act to the agricultural products act, I believe. That needs to happen in order to proceed, but that doesn’t guarantee that other products will actually be covered. It’s changing the wording. It’s an important step, but a very small step. It’s a step that could have been taken at any time in the last 11 years.

“It’s worthy to note that Ontario is the last province to actually move in this direction. We sometimes hear that Ontario is a leader” in climate change. “‘We’re a leader in climate change,’ the government says, ‘and we’re a leader in this.’ They’re certainly, absolutely not a leader in agriculture production insurance. They’re not a leader, they’re a laggard, and that’s important to note.”

And he goes on: “As much as we support this legislation.... [this] legislation in itself is not going to be that change. There is a lot of work and consultation to be done. This is a step—an important first step, but it is merely a step.”

And so, Mr. Speaker, our concern is not with the content of this bill. We support this bill and what it represents. Our concern is with the time it has taken the government to realize it. It should be noted that Ontario is the only province that does not allow production insurance for a broad range of agricultural products, so you can see why the agricultural industry has been calling for this change. It is another great example of how this government has managed to distinguish our province. Other such examples include having the highest tuition rates in Canada and the greatest net debt of any province in the country, so it is another area where the government needs to make necessary changes, and they need to happen now.

Agricultural insurance is one of the fundamental tools that we have to protect farmers and ensure food security for our province. It makes sense to ensure that all agricultural products are covered under this program, not just crops. So our concern is with the government’s motivations. As my colleague stated, this is a change that should have been put forward a decade ago, and there was no reason why it couldn’t have been put forward then. So while we appreciate that the change is being made, we are reminded of why so many believe that government is too slow or just generally behind the times. I guess the government must reap what it sows on this one.

I understand that there will always be outstanding changes that need to be made, but this bill represents a shining example of this concern and the reason for public disenchantment. For those who haven’t read the bill, it consists of a few pages of mostly the same statement: “... of the act is amended by striking out ‘agricultural crop or perennial plant’ and substituting ‘agricultural product’.”

Of course, the implications of this are significant and its impact will be far-reaching within the agricultural community. Farmers and agricultural experts have been calling for this change for years, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to join their voice in support.

It is also noted in this bill that the government will need to pass regulations once the bill passes. I hope, for the sake of the agricultural community, that those regulations are not going to take another decade to see the light of day. As I mentioned earlier, I’m not a farmer, but I’m pretty sure that if it took them 10 years to plant their field, it would have some pretty significant repercussions for their harvest.

There are also concerns about the government’s commitment to fund this bill. Ultimately, its implementation is going to cost money, yet no funding has been earmarked in the budget for this change.

Speaker, I will once again refer back to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane for further background on the reasons for our concerns, and I again quote.

“The cost of production insurance is shared by three partners: farmers, the provincial government and the federal government. It’s shared 40% by farmers, 24% by the province and 36% by the feds, and there’s the issue, because there’s no money on the table. We waited 11 years for a word, but there’s no money on the table, and that’s really important, Speaker, because we know that there’s no money in a lot of places. In fact, a lot of places are losing money.

1650

“There is another program where farmers worked together with previous Ministers of Agriculture. It’s a risk management program. The production insurance that we’re talking about today covers the actual production: how many tonnes of crop you get from a field, how many bushels of potatoes.... Risk management covers the price you get. With risk management you can insure yourself to make sure that—because crop prices go up and down, so it can kind of even it out. Agricultural groups, with the provincial government, got together and they did a really good job. They created a risk management program bar none for the province of Ontario. It was bankable; it was predictable. That’s what agriculture needed. Then this government capped it.

“It was estimated that for this program to run efficiently and to make sure that the agricultural sector, the base production sector, which actually drives the agri-food industry in our province, which creates, I believe, \$30 billion or \$34 billion in economic activity and fuels 740,000 or 750,000 jobs—that’s all based on the primary producer being solid, bankable and predictable so he can go to his bank and say, ‘I need to borrow X so I can plant my crops.’

“That’s what we had with the risk management program. Then this government capped it, so it’s no longer bankable or predictable. Does it help? Yes. Are the commodity organizations going to chastise the government? No, because at the end of the day, it’s the government. But, in all reality, Speaker, for that risk management

program to work, the cap has to be raised close to what it was when the program was originally designed, which is between \$175 million and \$200 million.

"Why that's important ... and why that has something to do with production insurance is because for the production insurance to be moved over, or for the umbrella to cover more commodities, the money is going to have to come from somewhere to pay the province's portion. That hasn't been identified."

I should also note that the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is among the ministries facing annual cuts of 6% per year, every year, for the next three years. I hope the government is accounting for this anomaly as they draft the required regulations.

As we have stated before, this is an important change that experts and stakeholders have been demanding for years, so we want to make sure the government has dotted its i's and crossed its t's. It is our job as members on this side of the aisle to hold the government to account, and we don't want anything left up to chance, just as the agricultural community is going to want some assurance when it comes to their insurance. That's what this bill is about.

Insurance provides a level of stability. It provides guarantees and peace of mind. Currently, there are large portions of the agricultural sector that do not have the opportunity to be a part of this program. As a specific example, Mark Wales, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, told Better Farming, "We've been working on getting more crop insurance products for quite some time." Livestock farmers "have been promised crop insurance for more than a decade, going back to the agricultural policy framework in the early 2000s."

The fact is that farmers have needed these changes for a long time. Pork farmers should have had access to insurance against PED. Beef farmers should have had access to insurance against BSE. No, Speaker, I'm not going to attempt to pronounce the full names of those diseases, but what I will do is say that both of these diseases represent the same thing: instability. Just as any company insures their building in case of fire or theft, the agricultural industry should be able to insure its assets against outside risk factors.

This program currently protects producers from yield reductions and crop losses caused by factors beyond their control, including drought, disease, pests, frost and floods. Any of these can cause significant volatility to a farmer's business. Regardless of the precaution they take, there is nothing that can guarantee protection from a pest or invasive species.

I had the opportunity to learn about invasive species recently. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters is headquartered in Peterborough, not far from my riding, and I popped in and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with them over the winter break. I did my undergraduate degree, interestingly, in biology and was able to have conversations about fish, fish science, fishing and conservation, and we talked about invasive species. They primarily focus on the threat of invasive species to On-

tario's lakes and wetlands, but potential for catastrophic damage is consistent with the concerns that the agricultural sector faces with a number of pests.

In partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters developed the Invading Species Awareness Program in response to the fact that "invading species can have devastating effects on native species, habitats and ecosystems." This is the same devastation that harmful pests can have on crop yields, and it's the reason why agricultural insurance is just as necessary as insurance is to any other industry and why it is important that this program is expanded to include livestock.

I'll also take this opportunity to invite everyone, outdoor enthusiasts, to stop in and visit their new heritage and education centre. You can learn all about invasive species and more.

There are actually a lot of similarities between this and some of the other issues I've been speaking about in my role as the NDP pension critic. This is also about ensuring stability for Ontarians and for Ontario's economy. Leaving people in the lurch prevents them from effectively planning for their future and limits their ability to act as freely as they otherwise would, whether that be investing in their farming business or contributing to their local economy with a greater discretionary income. It benefits all of us when an entire sector, especially one as significant as the agricultural sector, is more effectively able to plan and grow.

As I stated in a speech to the Legislature just last week: "We don't want our communities to suffer. As Ontarians, I don't believe we want our neighbours to struggle. We don't want our businesses to go under. We don't want our young people to feel hopeless. We don't want our seniors hungry and destitute. We want people employed. We want people to be secure and comfortable in their golden years."

Stability is important for a business, important for a farm, just as it is for a family, and it is another important reason why I support this bill.

Speaker, I would be remiss to not take a brief moment to at least recognize the important role that the agricultural community plays in all of our lives every day. They grow the food we eat, provide the milk we drink and play a foundational role in the economy in our province and across the country. The reach of their industry extends far and wide.

We are all well aware of the rise in obesity rates across North America and the effect that this has on the well-being of our citizens, and the cost it has on our health care system. As a teacher, I am reminded of the importance of food literacy, which is a topic also endorsed by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and that the greatest indicator of a healthy diet is not what you eat but where that food is from.

Generally speaking, the closer we are to where our food is produced, the better it tends to be for us. In schools, we talk about nutrition, and locally grown food needs to be a part of that conversation. Fruits and veggies

that ripen on the vine, in the field or on the tree have far more nutrients than those that ripen in a cargo container. Sometimes the simplest answer is the best one, and when it comes to food literacy, there are few better pieces of advice than increasing the amount of locally grown produce in your diet.

On a side note, if I may, for anyone that is interested, it is worth taking a look into the Good Food Box program from FoodShare. It's basically a subscription service for local produce that provides members with a box of fresh, in-season fruits and vegetables on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly cycle, all for the purpose of fostering community development and promoting healthy eating. I think any time that we can bring the community and health together, we're going to strengthen our societies.

As I've stated a few times now, I may not be a farmer, but, as I said in my inaugural speech back in July, I did talk about my affection and affinity for backyard gardening. When it's a little bit less chilly than it is now, I tend to spend whatever time I can growing heirloom and organic vegetables and herbs in my backyard. Though my production output may not be on the same scale as my esteemed colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane—

Mr. John Vanthof: It's bigger right now.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Well, it's the best I can do in my limited acreage, and I have also contended with—maybe not invasive—well, invasive species, but they're rabbits, and we can talk about what to do about rabbits and all the things that ate my cucumbers another time. But I digress.

The point is, the agricultural community plays a foundational role not only in the economy of Ontario but in the well-being of all Ontarians.

1700

It is an unfortunate fact, but a fact nonetheless, that food bank usage in Ontario has increased by 20% since 2008. Feed the Need Durham is an organization in my riding founded on the principle that hunger should not be the reason to prevent anyone from the chance to fulfill their potential. As an extension of that principle, they provide not only non-perishable foods and items but also distribute fresh produce to 46 member agencies across Durham region. Though I may be getting a little off topic, I like to take every opportunity I can to mention Feed the Need Durham and thank them for the incredible work they and all those member agencies do in our community. And, by extension, the families and community members they support appreciate having fresh fruits and vegetables on their tables at home.

The point is, the impact of the agricultural community is far-reaching. So it is important that we, as legislators, listen to the industry and work with them to pass the changes they need to grow, if you'll pardon the pun. That is what this bill does, albeit more than a little late and in the form of little more than enabling legislation, but ultimately a necessary step toward necessary change for farmers across the province.

Before my time expires, I wish to remind the government that their job is not complete and that there

are still regulations that need to be drafted before livestock farmers and other producers are protected under the insurance program. New funding will also be needed unless the government decides to institute further cuts elsewhere as well. I ask that these changes are made promptly and properly to permit the best possible environment for our agricultural community to grow and flourish.

I thank all those who will speak today and have spoken before on An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act. I thank the minister for tabling this bill, delayed or not, and I thank my esteemed colleague the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane for his expertise and experience on this particular subject. Most importantly, I thank the agricultural sector for all the reasons we have discussed here today.

Our three parties may disagree on a lot of things, but this is one we fortunately do agree on. This bill is about ensuring stability for an industry that creates hundreds of thousands of jobs and infuses tens of billions of dollars into our economy. So it's important that it is passed promptly and that the necessary regulations follow suit. It isn't just that we all need to eat; we need to eat well, we need to eat healthfully, and we need to support our farmers and our agricultural sector as they endeavor to provide that for us.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak to Bill 40. I look forward to voting in favour at second reading.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Brampton-Mississauga South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mississauga-Brampton South, Madam Speaker.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill 40, the agricultural insurance act. In my opinion, the proposed Bill 40 reflects changes to modern agriculture in the province of Ontario.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I'm well aware of the impact of climate on agricultural production. Climate change is known to be responsible for some of the severe weather phenomena that Ontario has experienced in recent memory: flooding, ice storms, drought and severe thunderstorms. It can also lead to crop infestation and disease. Climate change may cause damage to property, including crops, infrastructure and the natural environment.

Fresh in our minds is the ice storm of December 2013. Thick ice knocked out power for days and, in some cases, fallen trees toppled wires and made streets impassable. As we move to confront climate change, we must also make certain that we better manage the financial risk of this damage, as Bill 40 will do.

Food producers create jobs in rural and urban ridings like Mississauga-Brampton South. It's very important. Improving insurance for the agriculture sector makes sense and it is a sound economic policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Question and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to make a few comments with regards to Bill 40.

I think that the government's direction here is an appropriate one—to be looking at the way in which we can provide the kind of support to the vagaries of agriculture, and the need for a wider group of crops to be recognized. But I also want to just remind the government that when they're talking about this, they're also talking about sustainability.

There are many concerns under the broader title of agricultural sustainability—certainly more than I can fit in here in the time available. But the one message I'd like to convey to the government, in looking at not only how to provide the kind of support that Bill 40 does, is also to look at the land classification system.

In too many places there is only recognition of class 1 agricultural land. In fact, there are four classes of agricultural land. Class 4 doesn't mean that it can't be used. I think it's really important for land use planning to be able to look at that potential, to look at all four classes and how they support each other in different crop ways.

This is something that I'm aware the OFA is concerned about. I'm also aware of the fact that many land use planning directives neglect looking at all four classifications as appropriate classifications to maintain the kind of sustainability we must have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm absolutely thrilled to be able to stand to comment on the member from Oshawa and her 20-minute debate she did on this legislation, Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

As I was listening to the member, I was learning about what this legislation actually means. What it really does is it changes the act from saying "agricultural crops" and "perennial plants" to now just "agricultural products." It opens up the basket to make sure that more people can use this insurance.

I heard that this is really only enabling legislation, and that more needs to be done to ensure that folks really can get the proper insurance they need. But a lot of the stuff that she talked about—and of course, we cannot pass up this opportunity of making sure that we have healthy food on the table.

Today, for instance, the RNAO was here. The top three things they asked for, which are helpful to put food on the table, were raising the minimum wage to \$14 an hour and ensuring enforcement of fair labour standards; investing 1% of Ontario's budget to address the repair backlog of affordable housing and to create new affordable housing; and increasing the dangerously low social assistance rates so that they reflect the actual cost of living.

Doing these things can ensure that we get healthy food on everybody's tables and that we're not just counting on our food banks for a healthy box to make sure that happens. I know that Ontario is plentiful; we need to make sure that everybody gets a piece of that pie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm very happy to speak in the House today and to show my full support for Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), put forth by the Honourable Jeff Leal, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who does a great job for our farming community.

1710

The bill amends the Crop Insurance Act of 1996 to expand the insurance. Currently the act applies to "agricultural crops" and "perennial plants." The bill would expand the act so that it would apply to all agriculture products that are designated by the minister for regulation.

The insurance unveiled by Bill 40 puts more commodities under that umbrella, and that's the long and short of this. It hasn't been updated since 1996. It's long overdue. If passed—and I certainly hope it will be—Bill 40 would expand Agricorp, which covers production losses and yield reductions caused by insured losses for vegetables, fruit and honey, forage—which is grasses and other plants that are eaten by animals such as cows, and perennial plants. There is no doubt that there needs to be an expansion of the list of agriculture products under Ontario's Agricorp. Today's threats of invasive species, volatile agriculture commodity markets and increasing frequency of very extreme weather events—something called "climate control"—are amongst just a few of those reasons.

I can tell you that my relatives came to this area, the GTA, from Tipperary, Ireland, back in 1846. They landed in Pickering, in Cherrywood. They were farmers: the Teeffys. They ended up with several farms. They now have farms across Ontario. They have done just wonderful, wonderful things, and they would have been thrilled with this legislation today. As they look down upon me—as most Irish people do, they'll say, "Thank you very much."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oshawa, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much for the thoughtful comments from the members in the Legislature from Mississauga-Brampton South and York-Simcoe, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, and my neighbour from Ajax-Pickering.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the Legislature for any reason, but this was a bit new for me. I don't come from a farming background per se. We may not think of farms in Oshawa, but we are surrounded by fields and farms. At a morning at one of our vibrant farmers' markets, you can see the showcase of what surrounds us and what we're able to easily access and benefit from.

My introduction to farming since being elected was the trip to the International Plowing Match. While that was a great opportunity to connect with the agricultural community in a big way, I think it's important for us as legislators to recognize that our role is more than to have our picture taken with a shiny tractor. I was on the float that was actually driven by a shiny tractor—well, it

wasn't that shiny, but a tractor that was driven by our member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—and it is wonderful as a caucus to be able to draw from our strengths and our backgrounds in that way.

While I said that I may not come from a farming background—I had the opportunity to speak about this before—my father has decided to become a farmer in his retirement, and he has wonderful adventures that I can learn from. I've learned that there is such a thing as a deer fence: that you have to build a fence of a certain height to keep the deer from hopping into your orchard and the area where you're growing your goodies. I get to hear stories about that. He has also built a chicken coop, and has wonderful stories about chickens and roosters. While this bill may not affect him, I think we can all appreciate that farming hits very close to home on our table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to get involved in the debate for Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act, an act to amend the Crop Insurance Act, 1996. I appreciate the chance to speak and to bring the perspective of the outstanding farm and agri-food sector in the great riding of Leeds-Grenville.

First of all, I just want to say off the top, just like the agricultural community and the Ontario PC caucus's previous speakers, that I am supportive of Bill 40. I am proud of the great relationship that I have with the agriculture producers and agribusinesses in Leeds-Grenville. We regularly meet to discuss concerns within the industry, and I've had the chance over the last couple of months to meet with a variety of local producers and groups in my riding, which include the Leeds county milk committee, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario's St. Lawrence/Ottawa Valley district, and the Grain Farmers of Ontario, district 13. I also had the opportunity to join producers in my riding at last month's Dairy Farmers of Ontario 50th anniversary banquet and, just last week, the Beef Farmers of Ontario AGM.

Finally, I should also add that I was pleased to join Minister Leal himself for a meeting with a group of young farmers from my riding when he made a whirlwind trip through Leeds-Grenville at the end of January. It was a great discussion at the Verburg family farm on the challenges facing the new generation of farmers who desperately want to carry on the family tradition.

I'd like to think that the time I invest in cultivating my relationships with agricultural producers in Leeds-Grenville gives me a fairly good understanding of some of the concerns.

It's interesting, in the context of today's debate, that the topic of production insurance really doesn't come up a lot when you have those types of meetings with the farmers in your riding. It's not that it's not an important issue, but when the priority comes for farmers and farm families, this isn't the one they decide they want to talk to me about.

However, what they do want to talk about, like most constituents, is the rising cost of electricity as a result of

this government's mismanagement of that sector. The ever-rising cost of energy doesn't just hurt industries. The soaring price farmers are paying to keep the lights on and operate their equipment is devouring more and more of whatever income the family can produce. Unlike industries that we see packing up and leaving the province for greener pastures and cheaper energy, our farmers can't take their land somewhere else to do their business. For them, the only option would be to leave the farm altogether. That's an issue Bill 40 can't resolve, obviously, because there is no insurance against this government's costly energy blunders.

Whenever I'm with any of the groups I met with earlier—people like the Christian farmers, the OFA, egg farmers, beef farmers, dairy producers or any other farm group—I appreciate the fact that when you meet with them, they give you the straight goods. They don't waste their time talking around an issue. They don't really have that time to waste. They cut right to the point. I'm going to follow their lead when it comes to issues around Bill 40. They look at me, and they say, "Steve, this idea to expand production insurance beyond crops is a good idea." They say that we should support the bill.

They're telling me this because they know, when it comes to offering producers insurance for a broad range of agricultural products, that we here in Ontario trail every other province. In fact, I was very disappointed to learn that we're the last province to do this. It's especially disappointing, because we know how much our farm and food sector means to our economy. When you look at the economic impact they have, the figures are really staggering.

The sector sustains 760,000 jobs in Ontario and is directly responsible for some \$34 billion worth of economic activity annually. What those numbers tell us is that the food we're producing is not only critical to our basic needs—we have to eat to live, after all—but this industry is the backbone of our provincial economy. I don't think we truly appreciate the significant role the farm sector plays in our economy, and that's why it's so critical for us to ensure that it is healthy and sustainable. That's why I share the view of the farmers in my riding who say that Bill 40 is a welcome piece of legislation. In it, we're finally seeing this government take the long overdue step of creating a production insurance program that will go beyond crops and perennial plants.

I would point out something raised with me by an OFA official when I asked them for some feedback on Bill 40. While they called it a good-news story, they questioned why it has taken so long for the government to act on this. In fact, they pointed me to a 2003 federal-provincial agriculture policy framework that highlighted the need to expand crop insurance to other farm products. That's 11 years ago. No wonder the farmers I represent are asking one question of me and also to the minister: Why did this take so long?

I think there are some fair questions about the timing of the bill. Why, after 11 years of waiting, would the government act now on an issue they know has widespread support among the agriculture sector? We know

over here that nothing happens by accident when it comes to the timing of legislation, and I agree with one suggestion that's been made during this debate: I think the true motivation here is the heat that the government has been taking from the farm community over neonicotinoids. I know the government threw science out the window when it announced an 80% reduction in the use of neonics by 2017. Already we're hearing from the Grain Farmers of Ontario that it's going to cost their sector \$630 million a year. I wonder if the grain and oilseed producers in my riding can get some insurance for those losses.

1720

I also want to bring forward the frustration that farmers have expressed to me about this government not doing its homework. They look at the government's own recommendations from the Bee Health Working Group. Again, what they said to me was that farmers should implement some of the new best practices that are being discussed. They've made some gains. I think bee deaths will reduce by 70%.

They're telling me that they did their part. They have worked with the government; they decided to be partners. Yet the government turned around and made their announcement without that consultation. Judging from what I heard when I had a chance to drop in to the grain farmers' region 13 AGM in Elgin, I don't think Bill 40 is going to make the problem go away for government. They were very concerned, and they expressed it to me that day.

I also feel that we need to talk about the fact that this piece of legislation also has to deal with regulations. If you read through the bill, it's very short, just five pages, which includes the cover and the explanatory note. Really, when you look at the bill, it doesn't say that much; it just amends the title of the Crop Insurance Act, adds a few definitions, and substitutes a lot of language in the act which was passed in 1996. What Bill 40 does is it gives the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs the ability to create the new production insurance program, but again, there's the issue of the regulations. I certainly hope they show a little more urgency than they have shown over the last 11 years.

When you read through the bill, the key part for people to pay attention to is the one where the act is amended to add the following:

"Regulations by minister

"11.1 The minister may make regulations,

"(a) designating agricultural products for the purposes of this act;

"(b) defining any word or expression used in this act that has not already been expressly defined in this act."

This is where we're giving the minister the authority to make the regulations that will determine how Ontario's new production insurance program is going to operate.

As I said earlier this week when I was talking about Bill 31, this legislation is another example of the devil being in the details of those regulations when they are

being brought forward by the minister. That means the answers to the most important questions that farmers I represent have about this program are unknown. So we're not debating the actual program, and the unknown aspect is a concern to farmers, to myself and, I think, to our entire caucus.

I want to pick up on a point made by our critic on the file, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who made this point in his lead-off back before the House rose for Christmas. He pointed out that neither the minister nor his parliamentary assistant, in opening the debate on Bill 40, offered much insight into what this program is going to look like. They've made commitments about consulting closely with the federal government and with farmers—and certainly we're going to hold them to that and make sure those talks do happen—but there's still reason for concern because we know this government doesn't exactly have a sterling record when it comes to implementing new programs. I can mention the Green Energy Act. I can talk about some of the other programs they've had difficulty with, things like Ornge and eHealth and MaRS. I see the Minister of Community and Social Services is across from me. That SAMS debacle is just another case of the government not implementing a program. On that program, the SAMS program, my constituency office is right beside an ODSP office. It's right next door. I was hearing about problems with that program before they even happened.

So it's quite reasonable for us to express concern about how the minister is going to carry out this process on how Bill 40 will get through once the bill goes to committee. After seeing how the government dealt with two bills this week—by moving to close debate—this bill will probably have the same thing happen to it next week some time.

I just want to talk briefly about some questions and concerns that farmers have raised to me about the new program. Certainly a primary concern of theirs will be the cost of the program. We know production insurance costs are shared by the province, which pays 24%; the feds, who pay 36%; and of course the farmers, who pay the remaining 40%.

We're talking about a significant change here to create an insurance program that extends coverage to additional agricultural products, including livestock and bees. While the change from just crops and perennial plants to other commodities is a good idea and one that's long overdue, the fact is, it's going to cost more. We need to know, then, how the government plans to pay for it. The last thing we want to do, in establishing a new production insurance program, is to drain funds away from the existing programs that Ontario's agricultural sector relies on for support.

The critic also questioned whether there would be incentives available to encourage farmers to buy into the new crop insurance program. One of the questions, for example, that they've had is, will there be a premium holiday? That's something that I've heard on a number of occasions.

Farmers are going to be watching this program. They want to know the most obvious things: What is this going to cost me? How much time am I going to have to spend filling out paperwork? I hear that over and over again. One of the things that comes up at meetings all the time is this red tape, this filling out of paperwork.

I know our previous ag critic, the member for Oxford, exposed how big a problem this is in the agri-food sector. He did a survey that essentially said—and it was an unbelievable number—the farmers in the province spend 154.2 hours every year filling out government forms. That was part of his survey. Think about how hard these men and women work in the agricultural sector and the fact that they do such a good job, yet in addition to a 40-hour week, they've got this tremendous amount of time filling out paperwork.

In the few moments I have remaining, I want to talk about another issue that, during debate previously, I've always been on the record about—the government, when they have these consultations. It's one thing to have them; I want them to listen to people. I know the parliamentary assistant is making copious notes across from me.

I've said that I would love to have one of those consultation meetings in Kemptville because of what happened regarding Kemptville college. The minister will have to speak to his colleague at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to see if the University of Guelph would even allow a meeting on that campus because I know that they've severely restricted the amount of bookings that take place at the college.

Again, I look at the debate, and I've read comments from people offering issues around farming, the fact that they're so concerned. It's almost been a year since the Kemptville college announcement was made by the University of Guelph. You have to ask, Speaker, what could be more important to the future of farming in this province than education? To me, it's critical.

The ministry went ahead and hired their provincial facilitator, Mr. Vanclief. He's a well-respected former federal minister. The minister and the ministry may think that they've solved all the problems of the world and they've answered all the questions on the future of Kemptville college with this report, but you know what, not by a long shot.

What he's accomplished with his announcement last month will take a very small step forward by agreeing with what everybody already supports, and that was to take the management of the campus and transfer it to the municipality of North Grenville. But there was nothing from the minister about the real issue, and that is the continuation of agriculture education in eastern Ontario. The reality is the minister and his colleague at training, colleges and universities need to show that this government is serious about partnering with a post-secondary institution to deliver those degree and diploma programs.

1730

I said it when the minister made the announcement. It's no surprise to me that Mr. Vanclief failed to find a

public or private institution ready to come forward. You look at his report and there are some glaring errors. About half a dozen institutions took the time to present a proposal. There was a lot of interest there, but there was no money put on the table. There was nothing put on the table to show.

I want to quote something the minister said in the opening remarks of this debate. Minister Leal said, and I quote, "While serving as Minister of Agriculture and Food, Premier Wynne issued the agri-food growth challenge. It calls on the sector to double its annual rate of growth and to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020." That's the quote, which is a great idea, but how do you expect a sector to grow like that when you're closing the institutions that provide the knowledge our agri-food and agribusiness sectors need to remain competitive? The answer, as we all know, is that you can't. I simply don't understand why the minister has been so blind to this.

In my riding, the Leeds and Grenville economic development committee had a great economic development summit in North Grenville in the fall. It's just about a kilometre or two away from the Kemptville college campus. We all talked about the tremendous opportunities that were there if the government would just make the commitment.

I was given a copy of a report entitled Planning for Tomorrow for OAC: Input from Industry. It's a report that was done by the Ontario Agricultural College and the University of Guelph that looks at the needs of the agriculture and food sector. I've talked about this report to the minister previously, and I hope he has a copy by now. If he's read it, he will realize the disastrous decision the government made to allow the University of Guelph to close that 97-year-old tradition of ag excellence. I've only got a few minutes left, and I just want to share a few highlights of the report in the important context of the debate that we're having today.

Here's one eye-opening finding:

"The survey revealed the large gap that currently exists in Ontario in the supply of graduates trained in agriculture and food programs and the difficulties employers are having in finding suitably trained graduates."

Another section found that "demand in Ontario is three times supply for agricultural graduates at the bachelors level."

Finally, this conclusion: "Via this study, our interaction with industry indicates that there are significant unmet needs in the agriculture and food sector in Ontario in regard to the number of students being trained at diploma, undergraduate and graduate level in agriculture or food programs."

You can see why I and the entire eastern Ontario agriculture and food sector are so adamant that we need to maintain education and training at Kemptville college. Forget the future; we can't even meet today's needs. So I can't understand why the government, even though they've got this bill that is long overdue, cannot make a commitment to fill this unmet need, to make sure we've got young men and women coming forward to be our

next generation of farmers. We can't meet the demand now. How are we going to create 120,000 new jobs when we're not having graduates at the degree, diploma and undergraduate level? The ministry needs to stop and take a look at their decision and reverse what happened one year ago.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to once again stand in this House and to comment on the member for Leeds–Grenville regarding Bill 40. Although we disagree philosophically on many occasions, I would like to say it's an honour to work with the member for Leeds–Grenville on furthering the interests of the people of rural Ontario.

On this bill, we've all spoken in favour. This bill is enabling legislation, and it's going to go forward. It's 10 years too late. Where the devil is in the details is in how this bill is actually going to be funded and if it's going to be funded with new funding or if some money is going to be taken out of another area, or if it's just going to lie dormant and then it will just be a press release. That's where the rubber is going to hit the road.

I have to say that this government has been a bit of a contradiction, as far as agriculture goes. I'll give an example: Right now we've heard that we want to focus a lot more on jobs, and one of the focuses is northern agriculture, bringing agriculture to northern Ontario. Good idea. But some people might not know this: In one of the best places for agriculture in northern Ontario, in the little clay belt around Temiskaming Shores, this government is now allowing solar farms to be built on the best land we have in northern Ontario. Why? Because in northern Ontario there is no land designation. So while this government says that they want to promote agriculture in northern Ontario, they stand idly by while on the best land in the Temiskaming district—tile-drained, cleared, farmed for a hundred years—they're building solar farms.

Again, if you want to talk about agriculture, let's talk about agriculture and let's fix the problems right away. Let's designate the land in all of Ontario, not just in southern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Leeds–Grenville's debate on this bill. I'm pleased to hear that in essence he supports the bill and he thinks that it's going to be welcomed by the farmers.

Representing an urban riding, I just want to say that we completely appreciate the farmers' contribution to society as a whole in Ontario. They do feed us. We walk the streets and talk to condo owners. They're so passionate about fresh and locally grown food. So I think it's very appropriate for me to respond to this.

I would like to point to the Open Ontario strategy that the Premier has been talking about. In fact, the minister responsible for international trade will be travelling with the minister for rural affairs and agriculture very soon to promote Ontario agri-foods. I think that is needed. These

are bold moves to build a brand to promote what we are best at here and the best of our agriculture products. I think that this bill will broaden the coverage for farmers and will encourage the introduction of new produce and products. I'm very confident that this bill will give farmers additional protection when it comes to a natural disaster or anything that they couldn't foresee.

I look forward to further debates on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise and provide comment on the member from Leeds–Grenville's comments about, basically, the legislation that's going to increase insurance—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Production insurance coverage, yes, for additional agricultural products. He spoke about many things within the bill, but I want to commend him for his action in fighting the closure of Kemptville College and the agriculture courses there. He was a champion and went there. They've still continued to close agriculture programs there, which is opposite to what the government—they want to—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, they want sustainable agriculture. We have thousands and thousands of farmers across the province who want to stay in agri-business. They want their families to stay in agri-business if they can, and yet they closed down the Kemptville College agriculture courses. It's actually unacceptable, and I want to commend the member for Leeds–Grenville for his tenacity in fighting that on his own home turf, for fighting for all of us to stop that closure of Kemptville College.

He also mentioned comments about the frustration with the red tape in the business of agriculture. In fact, surveys have said that three out of five farmers wouldn't have gone into the business if they'd known about the red tape and the paperwork involved in the agriculture sector. I think that's just terrible, but I tell you, that's what I hear.

1740

Interjection: It's the reality.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is the reality out there. This is a paperwork process.

Expansion of the insurance program: We're not opposed to it; we agree with it. We're lacking a lot of details. How frustrating is it going to be to apply, if you can? And if we're putting more farmers out of business, how many are going to actually be in business to apply for a program that could be very frustrating?

Unfortunately, that's all my time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the ability—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this bill and the speeches of my colleagues.

As you're well aware, Speaker, agricultural insurance is one of the fundamental tools that we need to protect farmers, to protect rural Ontario. But what we have

before us is just enabling legislation. The government is going to have to bring forward regulations; it's going to actually have to put funding on the table before we know if this is of substance or not. My colleague from Timiskaming spoke very well about whether there's actually going to be new money on the table—or is this just a rearrangement of titles, a reprinting of bills with new names on them? Is it actually going to be substantive for the farmers in this province whose production we in the cities depend on?

Right now, we have a bill, the Crop Insurance Act, that applies only to a limited, designated group of crops and products. This bill changes the name of the act. That's not a bad thing, but I don't know how substantial it is. It changes the name of the Ontario Crop Insurance Fund. Again, who can dislike renaming a fund? But is it going to change things?

There are no regulatory changes attached to this bill that we're aware of. There's no indication that funding will be attached to actually implement this bill. So I ask, and I would hope the government would speak to this: What, substantively, will we get out of this, other than name changes? Will there be funding? Will it make a difference to producers of all agricultural products in Ontario? Will we actually see regulations come forward? Will there be public consultation on those regulations so we'll actually be able to judge if something substantive has been done for Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Leeds–Grenville, you have two minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the speakers from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Trinity–Spadina, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Toronto–Danforth for their questions and comments. Again, I want to thank all the members for their attentiveness and their comments previously. I got a thumbs-up from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, so maybe that's a good sign. Hopefully, it's a thumbs-up for money for Kemptville College. I don't know, but we'll see.

The member for Toronto–Danforth hit the nail on the head of what I said earlier. You've got a piece of enabling legislation that ultimately the government will have to put some dollars on the table for. Again, I just worry, with the last year of my life, with the University of Guelph's decision with Kemptville college—the frustration that the province would appoint a facilitator yet not make a decision to put dollars on the table to show those post-secondary educational institutions that they're serious.

I want to go back to the minister's opening remarks in this debate, when you praised the Premier as a former Minister of Agriculture and Food. We're going to have so much difficulty getting this Agri-Food Growth Challenge for jobs to be able to have 120,000 new jobs by 2020. We've got a problem in this province. Our own reports are showing that demand in Ontario is three times the supply of agriculture graduates at the bachelor level. If you're going to look at 120,000 new jobs, and you've

already got demand exceeding supply three to one, how are you going to have that extra growth in jobs when you don't have young men and women who want to take on the family farm have an opportunity to have education close to home? The beauty of my campus was the fact that kids could go to school and then help on the family farm.

We need a commitment by this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to rise once again, twice today in this House, and to speak to Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

As my colleagues have previously mentioned here over the last couple of days, the bill is long overdue and it's about time that Ontario keeps pace with other provinces in this country. By extending this crop insurance, it would provide protection to all agriculture products. At the moment, it only applies to agricultural crops and perennial plants and leaves out other products like livestock. By amending the act, it will expand the scope to include all agricultural products.

I would like to talk about the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who actually did his one-hour lead yesterday, I believe. He talked about being happy that this bill is coming to fruition finally after its impetus was passed 11 years ago at a federal-provincial agricultural ministers meeting, back in 2003. So it has taken 11 years, Speaker. In his introductory remarks, the parliamentary assistant to the minister said the bill was moving with haste. If it takes 11 years for this government to move on desperately needed legislation when it's moving in haste, I'm not sure we want to know what normal speeds are.

From my critic portfolio, if you ask the members of the AODA Alliance, they would be sure to tell you quickly how long it takes this government to act on its promises. They were promised improvements to accessibility standards in this province 10 years ago. Yesterday, we just learned that the only thing they are going to receive is further cuts to the enforcement measures.

Another important thing, and a lot of members have spoken to it, is that this is merely a framework. It amends the name, it amends the act, but it's a framework. By definition, it is more broadly defined. But it does not specify what it's going to cover, who it's going to cover, if there is going to be any money on the table or if there are going to be any time targets. I think the government owes it to the Legislature, to the agricultural community and to the province's economy to move forward with this in a timely way, being that it has been on the books for 11 years.

Most importantly, it will be up to the government to ensure that it's an inclusive process of consultation; that the farmers, the researchers, the policy advisers, the communities and associations all have a chance to have their say on this legislation. I need not remind us of what happens when the government doesn't heed the advice of those facing issues on the ground on a daily basis. In the last few years that I've been here, we've witnessed this: the wasted money, in the case of this Liberal government,

billions of dollars, you get with an Ornge scandal that's still under OPP investigation, an eHealth crisis that has not yet been resolved, P3s wasting \$8.2 billion of taxpayers' money; or you have a government entangled in an OPP investigation—three, I think; one as a result of the election rules being broken.

In my critic area, we have the issue of the SAMS program as well, affecting thousands of people on Ontario Works and on Ontario disability support payments, \$250 million spent on a program that's not working. Now we're going to have to spend some more money actually bringing in a peer reviewer to try to fix the problems. It's very important, I think, that this issue move forward in a timely way.

One of the reasons that the SAMS program is broken is because the government failed to heed the advice of front-line staff and managers who were sending red flags and warnings for many months and who actually begged the government not to move forward in December until we got all the kinks out. But that didn't happen. We've seen system failures lead to massive budget cuts later on in order to compensate for this government's waste.

We have the ability to do the right thing here, and I urge the government to take those next steps. We have 14,000 farmers in this province who cover an average of five million acres that have crop insurance. It's good to finally be moving forward with a framework that will protect all of these five million acres.

1750

As it stands, there are no regulatory changes nor any funding with the bill. As we've seen far too often with this government, action is hard to come by. I urge the government to move hastily to start the consultation.

Although I've never been a farmer, I have a riding that encompasses a large farming community in Wainfleet, and so these issues are important to my community as well.

We all enjoy our fine Niagara wines. We talked a bit about wine in private members' business a while ago. I hope that we all do our best to support our local economies and to buy local wine. According to my friend and CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario, Debbie Zimmerman, Ontario's grape and wine industry is a \$3.3-billion economy to this province and employs over 14,000 people. She says that crop insurance is one of the risk management tools that grape growers count on in difficult years. It provides a cushion for those farmers in the event of environmental damage because of the elements.

I'm sure we all remember last year's polar vortex as we were doing by-elections in Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those frigid temperatures aren't just horrible memories implanted in our minds; they've left their mark on the Niagara region and on the wine industry. Derek Saunders, who founded the Calamus Estate Winery near Beamsville, adds that anyone who tried to shop for a local wine as of last summer will have noticed it was impossible to actually buy a 2014 Merlot or Sauvignon Blanc on any of the store shelves because it was the hardest hit.

The VineAlert program, which measures the bud survival rates in Ontario, estimates that only 50% of the buds survived last winter. Unfortunately, this winter will be a bad season as well for the wine industry as a result of the cold temperatures. Although the blankets of snow seem to be helping, there's no guarantee that it will save the crops.

As my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane previously mentioned, the issues of agriculture and the environment go hand in hand. It's inevitable that the more extreme weather we see, the more support our farming communities and our agricultural sector will need. The bill, in principle, will help provide the framework for these supports.

The recent cold temperatures in Ontario over the last few weeks in the Niagara area are going to cause severe crop damage to grapes and to tree fruits. Ryan Brewster, who is a field service manager, is anticipating a complete wipeout this year in Niagara for peaches, apricots and plums. Although the extent of the damage is too early to assess, it doesn't look good. The early signs are troubling, and it's too soon to tell for certain.

These people who I'm mentioning here in my remarks today are reassured about the principles of the bill, and that expanding coverage for the production losses or the yield reductions is good for agriculture. If it's good for agriculture, it's good for business, it's good for the economy, and it's good for the people who otherwise wouldn't be able to actually afford it. It seems that we all agree to the principles of this bill, but we need to know some of the other answers: Who will be included, what's the funding going to be like, what are the targets going to be like and all of those kinds of issues.

If this bill had been passed earlier—we've been waiting 11 years for it to come around—it might have helped the pork farmers dealing with PED and it might have helped the beef farmers dealing with BSE, more commonly known to us as mad cow disease. Those farmers took a big hit, and this kind of bill certainly would have helped them, if it applied to them.

I want to speak for a couple of minutes—I've got about four left—about bees, because bees are a real issue across this country and in particular in this province. Although they seem insignificant, without honey bees, the agricultural sector would be doomed. When the Minister of Agriculture and the parliamentary assistant presented this bill, there was no specific mention of honey bees, although the bee mortality rate had been on the rise since around 2006. Bees are pollinators, and as a result, our ecosystems rely on them. Our farmers especially rely on bees for pollination. In fact, it's believed that almost half of the leading crops—apples, soybeans, cocoa, almonds—rely on pollination, and it's about a \$212-billion value. Crops couldn't reproduce without them.

Some blame pesticide use. The neonicotinoids, a pesticide that was banned last year, were believed to contain very low levels of toxicity to many insects. In 2013, a review of the neonicotinoids showed that, as they are typically used, they harm bees, and safer alternatives are needed.

Before I close here, Speaker, I want to just talk a bit about this interesting phenomenon that happens in my riding. It happens to be one of the places where wild and domestic bees thrive. It's an area that has been appropriately named the Niagara Beeway. It's about a two-kilometre swath on either side of the Welland Canal and, bizarrely enough, completely unaffected by the phenomenon of bee colony collapse. It seems to be a place where bee colonies continue to thrive. Beehives can be found on either side of the canal in trees, in factories, in churches and even in homes. Local organizations work with the beekeepers to ensure that these swarms of bees are captured, free of charge. They're later used for apprenticeship programs and training for new generations of beekeepers—so great for Welland and great for the province.

George Scott, my friend and president of the Niagara Beeway, told me that the small beekeepers actually welcome this bill as a positive turn in the sweep of bad news happening at every corner in the bee industry. If honeybees were included in this bill, it would provide beekeepers with a safety net to fall back on in the case of a bad colony loss.

What George did mention is that many large beekeepers often pay the price for previous beekeepers overstating their losses to insurance companies. Because verifying larger bee yards comes at a higher price to inspectors, it's rarely done, therefore, leaving enormous incentives to overstate those losses on claims. Unfortunately, Speaker, as with most cases of bad apples—while we're speaking about this bill—everyone ends up paying the price. The largest beekeepers end up receiving

delayed payment as a result of this, while the smaller bee yards get their claims returned in a timely manner.

Forget the administrative delays—these interruptions naturally then cause delays in replacing colonies. For example, if a beekeeper loses a yield of bees late in the year, they need to replace them immediately. The life cycle and the payment of the crop insurance don't mesh a lot of the time, Speaker. That's what I'm being told.

Lastly, another common denominator in all of my conversations is that losses aren't always claimed because the current paperwork required under the crop insurance plan is an administrative nightmare. It's time-consuming. It is inaccessible. As a result of that, we're not even capturing all of the losses of farmers in this province. I hope that this bill, when it actually has some meat on the bones, addresses some of those issues that the beekeepers in our agricultural sector are wanting to rely on in their small businesses.

Ultimately, the insurance act bill is one that we as New Democrats will be supporting. It's desperately needed—for over a decade, almost 11 years—and one that should have been implemented sooner. It's now up to the government to table the plans that actually go with the bill. We hope it doesn't take another 11 years for that to happen.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glenarray–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwaia, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Premier / Première ministre
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jeff Yurek	2418
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2418

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2419
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2419

Correctional services

Mr. Glenn Thibeault	2419
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2420

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Ted Arnott	2420
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2420
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2420

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Paul Miller	2421
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2421

Mining industry

Mrs. Cristina Martins	2421
Hon. Michael Gravelle	2421

Élection partielle à Sudbury

Mme Gila Martow	2422
L'hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2422

By-election in Sudbury

Miss Monique Taylor	2422
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2422

Nurses

Ms. Daiene Vernile	2423
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2423

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	2423
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2424

Visitors

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2424
-----------------------------	------

Closed captioning

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2424
------------------------	------

Visiteurs / Visitors

Mme Marie-France Lalonde	2424
Mr. Mike Colle	2424
Hon. Michael Gravelle	2424
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2424

Closed captioning

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2424
-------------------------------------	------

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015, Bill 56, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2015 sur le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario, projet de loi 56, Mme Hunter

Second reading agreed to	2425
--------------------------------	------

Closed captioning

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2425
------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Todd Smith	2426
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2426
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2426

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Peter Remillard

Mr. Jim McDonell	2426
------------------------	------

Vyrn Peterson

Mr. Michael Mantha	2426
--------------------------	------

Black History Month

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2427
--------------------------------	------

Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2427
----------------------------	------

Steve Revington

Ms. Peggy Sattler	2427
-------------------------	------

Youth Haven Barrie

Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2428
------------------------	------

Random Act of Kindness Day

Mr. Jeff Yurek	2428
----------------------	------

Events in Beaches—East York

Mr. Arthur Potts	2428
------------------------	------

Soins Continus Bruyère Continuing Care

M. John Fraser	2428
----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, 2015, Bill 69, Mr. Smith, Mr. Colle / Loi de 2015 sur l'équité fiscale pour les courtiers en valeurs immobilières, projet de loi 69, M. Smith, M. Colle

First reading agreed to	2429
Mr. Todd Smith	2429

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Great Lakes protection

Hon. Glen R. Murray	2429
---------------------------	------

Mining industry

Hon. Michael Gravelle	2430
-----------------------------	------

Great Lakes protection

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2431
----------------------------	------

Mining industry

Mr. Norm Miller	2431
-----------------------	------

Great Lakes protection

Mr. Percy Hatfield	2432
--------------------------	------

Mining industry

Mr. Michael Mantha	2432
--------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Realtors

Mr. Todd Smith 2433

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas 2433

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Arthur Potts 2433

Winter road maintenance

Mr. Norm Miller 2433

Employment standards

Ms. Peggy Sattler 2434

Prescription drugs

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde 2434

Trespassing

Ms. Sylvia Jones 2434

Natural gas rates

Ms. Cindy Forster 2434

Employment practices

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris 2435

Youth services

Mr. Jim McDonell 2435

Automotive industry

Mr. Percy Hatfield 2435

Realtors

Ms. Laurie Scott 2436

Off-road vehicles

Mme France Gélinas 2436

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Municipal Elections Amendment Act (Voting Hours Extension), 2015, Bill 68, Mr. Berardinetti / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur les élections municipales (prolongation des heures de scrutin), projet de loi 68, M. Berardinetti

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti 2436

Mr. Steve Clark 2438

Ms. Peggy Sattler 2438

Mr. Granville Anderson 2439

Mrs. Gila Martow 2440

Ms. Cindy Forster 2440

Mrs. Cristina Martins 2441

Mrs. Julia Munro 2442

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti 2443

Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act, 2015, Bill 58, Mr. Norm Miller / Loi de 2015 sur les autoquads et les véhicules polyvalents, projet de loi 58, M. Norm Miller

Mr. Norm Miller 2443

Mr. Gilles Bisson 2445

Mr. Lou Rinaldi 2446

Mr. Steve Clark 2446

Mr. John Vanthof 2447

Mr. Bob Delaney 2448

Mr. Victor Fedeli 2449

Mr. Bill Walker 2449

Mr. Norm Miller 2450

Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2015, Bill 67, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2015 pour porter un toast à l'Ontario, projet de loi 67, M. Smith

Mr. Todd Smith 2451

Mr. Gilles Bisson 2453

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn 2453

Mr. Jeff Yurek 2454

Mr. Peter Tabuns 2455

Hon. James J. Bradley 2455

Mr. Norm Miller 2457

Ms. Sylvia Jones 2457

Mrs. Gila Martow 2457

Mr. Todd Smith 2458

Municipal Elections Amendment Act (Voting Hours Extension), 2015, Bill 68, Mr. Berardinetti / Loi de 2015 modifiant la Loi sur les élections municipales (prolongation des heures de scrutin), projet de loi 68, M. Berardinetti

Second reading agreed to 2458

Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act, 2015, Bill 58, Mr. Norm Miller / Loi de 2015 sur les autoquads et les véhicules polyvalents, projet de loi 58, M. Norm Miller

Second reading agreed to 2459

Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2015, Bill 67, Mr. Smith / Loi de 2015 pour porter un toast à l'Ontario, projet de loi 67, M. Smith

Second reading agreed to 2459

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2015, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2015 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal

Ms. Jennifer K. French 2459

Mrs. Amrit Mangat 2462

Mrs. Julia Munro 2463

Miss Monique Taylor 2463

Mr. Joe Dickson 2463

Ms. Jennifer K. French 2463

Mr. Steve Clark 2464

Mr. John Vanthof 2467

Mr. Han Dong 2467

Ms. Laurie Scott 2467

Mr. Peter Tabuns 2467

Mr. Steve Clark 2468

Ms. Cindy Forster 2468

Second reading debate deemed adjourned 2470

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 26 February 2015 / Jeudi 26 février 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2015, Bill 56, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2015 sur le Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario, projet de loi 56,

Mme Hunter

Ms. Laurie Scott	2401
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2403
Hon. Glen R. Murray	2403
Mrs. Julia Munro	2403
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	2404
Ms. Laurie Scott	2404
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2404
Hon. Jeff Leal	2406
Ms. Sylvia Jones	2406
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2406
Hon. James J. Bradley	2407
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2407
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2407
Vote deferred	2409

Ontario Immigration Act, 2015, Bill 49, Mr. Chan / Loi de 2015 sur l'immigration en Ontario, projet de loi 49, M. Chan

Mr. John Fraser	2409
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	2409
Mr. Granville Anderson	2410
Mr. Bob Delaney	2411
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2411

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Steve Clark,	2412
Mme France Gélinas	2412
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2412
Ms. Christine Elliott	2412
Ms. Catherine Fife	2412
Hon. Bill Mauro	2412
Mr. Bill Walker	2412
Miss Monique Taylor	2412
Ms. Daiene Vernile	2412
Mr. Jim Wilson	2412
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2412
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	2412
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2412
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2412
Mrs. Cristina Martins	2412
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2412
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2412
Ms. Harinder Malhi	2412
Ms. Laurie Scott	2412

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2412
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2412
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	2413
Mr. Jim McDonnell	2413
Hon. Jeff Leal	2413
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2413
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2413
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2413
Hon. James J. Bradley	2413
Hon. Glen R. Murray	2413
Mr. Yvan Baker	2413
Mrs. Laura Albanese	2413
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2413
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	2413
Hon. Liz Sandals	2413
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	2413
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2413
Hon. Brad Duguid	2413
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2413
Use of props in the House	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2413

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim Wilson	2413
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2413

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim Wilson	2414
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2414
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2415

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2415
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2415

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2416
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2416

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	2417
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2417
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2417

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2417
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2417

Human rights

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	2417
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2418

Continued on inside back cover

C420N
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 50

N° 50

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 2 March 2015

Lundi 2 mars 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 mars 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Maggie Head, from former Speaker Steve Peters's office. She's the government relations manager with the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors. They have their reception at noon, and I'd like to welcome all the doctors to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In our galleries today will be representatives and members of the Wine Council of Ontario; they are here at Queen's Park. Their reception will occur this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. It's an opportunity for all members of the House to sample Ontario's very best VQA wines.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Raza Shah, of the naturopathic doctors, to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to introduce Emily Maher. Emily is here on an internship coordinated through the Clerks' office. She recently graduated with a bachelor of arts in political science, with a minor in women's studies, from the University of Akron, Ohio. She will be interning in my office for the next several weeks. Please join me in welcoming her to my team and to the Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence, I am pleased to make this introduction: Page Arlyne James's mother, Sheliagh Flynn James, and his father, George James, will be in the public gallery this morning. On behalf of the member and the assembly, I'd like to welcome them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, in the west members' gallery, Michelle and Rob Hamilton, from the riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Along with Maggie Head, I'd also like to introduce Dr. Elvis Ali, who is the head of the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors.

As well, we are joined this morning by Steven Muir, who is the senior staff member in my constituency office.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to introduce Angela Hanlon. She's a naturopathic doctor and chair of the North Huron Family Health Team. She's also on the board of OAND.

Mr. Grant Crack: Il me fait grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à ma fille, Chloé.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce my daughter, Chloé, in the east gallery, and her boyfriend, Joel Trotter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce Mr. Chris Eaton, who is here today. He's the father of page captain Riley Eaton, from the great riding of Whitby—Oshawa.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope everyone will join me in welcoming Dr. Raza Shah this morning. Dr. Shah is a naturopathic doctor and clinical director at the St. Jacobs Naturopathic Clinic, just north of Waterloo. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce four naturopathic doctors from the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors who are here with us today. They are Michelle Meyer, Barbara Weiss, Lisa Doran and Stephanie Scuiik. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, we have a very special guest: Ms. Gerry Rogers. She is a member of the Newfoundland House of Assembly. Her riding is St. John's Centre, and she is with us this morning. They are looking at a select committee on mental health and addictions, Speaker, something that I know you hold dear. I'm pleased to welcome her to Queen's Park.

Hon. David Zimmer: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Dr. Bob Bernhardt, who is the president of the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine, which is located in the lovely riding of Willowdale.

Ms. Christine Elliott: I have another introduction. I'd like to introduce Dr. Leigh Arseneau, who is also here with the naturopathic doctors today. Welcome.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce a former page from my riding—who is in the gallery—John Gobin, and his grade 10 class from Delphi Secondary Alternative School. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Cosmin Decuseara. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the MPP from Oshawa, I'd like to introduce Amber Bowes, the page captain for today, and her mother, Katherine Bowes; her father, Scott Bowes; her sister, Ashley Bowes, who was a former page; her grandmother, Ilah Dalk; her grandfather, Dennis Dalk; and family friends Chrisma Hodgins, Alan Hodgins and Keira Hodgins.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, we welcome representatives to the precinct from the Wine Council of Ontario. All are invited to their reception this evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, we have, from the riding of Brant, Dr. Alfred Hauk, here on lobby day. Doctor, welcome, and we're glad you're here.

Also, not my brother Joe, but Steve Peters, member from Elgin–Middlesex–London in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments, and Speaker in the 39th Parliament.

ERNEST CÔTÉ

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Ernest Côté, 1913 to 2015, one of the last World War II veterans, who passed away recently at the age of 101, with representatives from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes, to be followed by a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the Attorney General.

It's a great honour to stand in this House to pay tribute to the life of the great Canadian Ernest Côté.

Monsieur le Président, j'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de parler d'un héros, un héros qui a le pouvoir de nous inspirer en tant que fonctionnaires publics, en tant que citoyens et en tant que Canadiens.

Ernest Côté captured the hearts of Canadians when he courageously survived a home invasion last year. But of course, he will be remembered for much more than that. Throughout his life, Ernest Côté dedicated himself to his country and to his fellow Canadians.

Ernest Côté's life of service for Canada began in the Second World War, when he joined the Royal 22nd Regiment as a lieutenant. By 1943, he was a lieutenant colonel in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division. In this role, Côté played a part in planning the logistics for Canada's D-Day operations on Juno Beach. After serving for five years in Europe, Côté returned to Canada and retired from the armed forces.

1040

In a recent interview, Ernest's daughter Denyse Côté said her father "looked at his career as being a career of service, I think. He was serving Canada."

This career of serving Canada continued for Côté when he returned from World War II. After risking his life for our country, our values and our people, Côté went to work in public service. He joined the Department of External Affairs, where he enjoyed a 30-year career. Some of his notable accomplishments included serving as Deputy Solicitor General from 1968 to 1972, representing Canada at the early meetings of the United Nations General Assembly and helping to draft the charter of the World Health Organization.

In the early 1970s, he served as Canada's ambassador to Finland until he retired in 1975. But of course retirement didn't stop Côté from keeping involved. Côté travelled to France last summer to mark the anniversary of D-Day. He was also one of the 50 recipients of a flag

from the Prime Minister on flag day for his tremendous life of service to Canada.

In his personal life, Côté married the late Madeleine Frémont. They had four children: Michel Frémont-Côté, Benoit, Denyse and Lucie. It was his family who were with him last week when he passed away at the age of 101.

While many of us never met Ernest Côté, we are all familiar with the sacrifices he made, the meaningful work he did and the tremendous legacy he leaves behind.

It's truly an honour today to be able to join all the parties in this Legislature to pay homage to an individual who dedicated so much for all of us.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: C'est un honneur pour moi de rendre hommage à M. Ernest Côté, le grand héros d'Ottawa–Vanier. Précieuses et rares sont les occasions d'honorer de véritables héros, et Ernest Côté est la définition même du grand héros canadien dans tous les sens du terme.

Humble et optimiste, M. Côté a, tout au long de sa vie, donné de sa personne. Il s'est donné à son pays dans l'armée canadienne, comme mentionné par la première ministre, et comme haut fonctionnaire et diplomate. Il s'est aussi donné à l'éducation comme gouverneur de l'Université d'Ottawa, puis comme l'un des régents de l'Université de Sudbury. Il s'est donné à sa communauté comme ardent défenseur du français, mais aussi du bilinguisme. Il disait que posséder les deux langues officielles, c'est de devenir quelqu'un de plus complet.

Pour finir, je tiens à partager mes condoléances les plus profondes à sa famille, qui lui a permis de tant se donner. Je rends hommage à feu son épouse, Madeleine; à ses quatre enfants, Michel, Benoit, Denyse et Lucie; et à ses petits-enfants, Isa, Étienne, Stéphane et Tess. Merci d'avoir partagé votre héros avec nous.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When you are going through hell, keep going: a simple enough statement but one, once spoken by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, that would become the defiant call to action by Britain and her allies in the Second World War. The boldness, the audacity and, frankly, the clarity of those words still echo around the free world even today as the clarion call for the brave and the courageous.

Many young Canadian men answered that call between 1939 and 1945. They would become known as Canada's greatest generation. They built our country. Because of them, Canada came of age as a nation.

Ernest Côté was born in Edmonton, a lawyer and a French Canadian soldier with the famed Montreal-based Van Doos—was one of them.

After graduating from Laval, Ernest Côté left for England as a lieutenant with the Royal 22nd Regiment just months after being admitted to the bar in Alberta. Eventually he would be in charge of logistics as Canada prepared for the invasion of Normandy on the beach of Juno, one of our greatest military accomplishments, one that still instills national pride in every Canadian.

Mr. Côté went on to become a diplomat with external affairs and deputy minister with veterans affairs, among

other government departments. He exemplified what it meant to be a Canadian public servant; a war hero who would go on to speak at the United Nations on Canada's behalf; a governor at the University of Ottawa and a regent at the University of Sudbury. He supported the Canadian Geographic and l'Hôpital Montfort. Above all, he was committed to keeping Canada's legacy of the Second World War alive.

And I'm grateful he did. Let me explain. There are days when I walk into this chamber, as I know others do, feeling a bit overwhelmed; I often look to the ceiling. I think about our founding fathers and I think about those who sacrificed in our world wars and subsequent wars. I think of how small I am, and how small we all are, in the context of those giants. I think of the sacrifices of that generation to maintain peace, order and good governance.

It's not lost on me that we have freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of worship. We got that because of Ernest Côté's generation. Those who fought in the Second World War, it's important to remember, fought to either protect or to regain those freedoms.

It's also not lost on me that when Ernest Côté and his generation went to fight in the Second World War, this assembly was nearly homogenous. Forget the names Lisa, Christine, Andrea, Cheri, Deb or Kathleen. It wasn't until the end of the war that there was just one—Agnes. There weren't names like Fedeli, Yakabuski, Gretzky, Singh, Damerla or Naqvi. Ontario's first female Premier, and the head of a government in an English-speaking world who was openly gay, would never have seemed possible.

But because of that generation, because of men like Ernest Côté, because of their sacrifices and their valour, nothing in this country or in this province is impossible to achieve. Through them, we enjoy unlimited potential and opportunity. All we have to add is hard work and sometimes a lucky break.

The same can be said of our friends in the press, who I'm proud are here today. The Christina Blizzards and the Martin Regg Cohns of the world are free to write their opinions, free to speak freely, free to criticize the government and, Lord knows, the opposition in recent days, because they have no fear of retribution, because of the Ernest Côtés of the world.

Ernest Côté and his fellow soldiers fought against a vile, oppressive and hateful regime to end and defeat the Holocaust. Today, Jewish Canadians—any Canadian—need not fear their government, because people like Monte Kwinter and Gila Martow prove they can be government. That is the legacy of Ernest Côté.

I say to this assembly—and it is an appeal—that when a Canadian veteran or a soldier passes, it is up to us to honour and embrace their legacy, for without them, the values, the ideals, the comforts that we cherish, yet sometimes take for granted, might not be available.

Some might disagree, but, I respectfully suggest, look at Ernest Côté's path. Look at those who have followed

him, who still continue to fight against religious and ethnic persecution in the world, who have sacrificed to ensure that little girls get to go to school in Afghanistan and that their moms get to vote, and who have been deployed to restore self-government and freedom of the press, as is happening elsewhere in the world. In that sense, Ernest Côté's legacy, at 101 years old, was especially profound. We, by the virtue of speaking freely in this assembly today, are part of that legacy.

Ernest Côté died in every Canadian's second hometown last week, in the city of Ottawa. A Canadian hero, he was mourned and is mourned by an entire nation. He was the last of the D-Day colonels. His service was marked with distinction. Until the very end, as we all know, he was gutsy.

Though he was recently in the news for an unjust, unlawful, and un-Canadian act against him, he shouldn't be remembered for that. Instead, he should be remembered for his resolution, for his contributions to Canada and our sovereign, and, above all, for his bravery.

One of Ernest's last interviews was the result of that heinous experience. Perhaps characteristically of him and his generation, he said, "I was never afraid. I was madder than a wasp. Wasps ain't afraid; they're mad."

Now, at least 70 years after Churchill's declaration, the boldness, the audacity and, frankly, the clarity in Ernest Côté's words still echo around this country as the clarion call for the brave and the courageous.

On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I wish to extend condolences and thanks to Ernest Côté's family. I want them to know that we shall remember him.

To Ernest Côté, I say, rest peacefully and God bless you.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further discussion?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Timmins-James Bay.

I'm very honoured to rise on behalf of New Democrats to pay tribute to Ernest Côté, who passed away last Thursday at the age of 101. Like so many of Canada's veterans, Monsieur Côté believed in service, and his distinguished career will be remembered as one of service to Canada.

His service to our country began when he joined the Canadian army in 1939 as a lieutenant and member of the Royal 22nd Régiment. As a lieutenant colonel, Côté served as the logistics officer with the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, which landed on Juno Beach on June 6, 1944. On D-Day, Canadian Forces faced some of the stiffest resistance and yet made the furthest advances into France of any Allied units.

Monsieur Côté believed that "D-Day was the beginning in Europe that denied the forces of Nazism and fascism from spreading to take away the freedom of all of us."

Following the war, Côté went on to have a distinguished 30-year career in the public service. He served in external affairs, northern affairs and veterans affairs, among other posts. He participated in the first meetings of the United Nations General Assembly, where he was involved in drafting the charter for the World Health Organization, and he would serve as Canada's ambassador to Finland.

Despite a very successful career as a top civil servant, he is remembered by those who met him during those years for his kindness, for always being friendly and taking the time to stop and talk with staff. He retired from public service in 1975, but he continued to serve as an example. Monsieur Côté was always a fixture at Remembrance Day ceremonies and at the Canadian War Museum.

He believed very strongly that young people must appreciate the freedoms we enjoy. He believed that they must not be indifferent. "Young people today must know that freedom is very often under attack in non-military ways. Freedom of thought. Freedom of the press. The challenge to keep these freedoms is a very difficult exercise that young people must accept."

As a father of four—two girls and two boys—Monsieur Côté believed that everyone should be treated equally, and he ensured that his daughters would enjoy the same access to higher education as his sons would. His children remember him as being kind, loving, humble and private, with a deep love of his country.

All of us in this room and everyone who has the honour to serve the people of Ontario and of Canada would do well to reflect on the service of Ernest Côté, to remind ourselves what service to our country really means, to recommit ourselves to the highest standards of service, honour and integrity.

We may have lost a great Canadian, but we will remember him.

M. Gilles Bisson: Comme ma chef et d'autres ont dit, on reconnaît que M. Côté était un individu qui est né ici au Canada et qui n'avait jamais l'intention, quoi qu'il allait faire dans sa vie, d'être aussi important, non seulement après la guerre, mais durant la guerre.

Puis je pense que ça a été dit—et, je pense, bien dit, par ma collègue, M^{me} MacLeod—que quand ces hommes-là sont entrés dans l'armée entre 1939 et 1945, ils ne sont jamais entrés parce qu'ils voulaient être, eux-mêmes, les héros. Ils ne sont jamais entrés parce qu'ils pensaient que c'était eux-mêmes qui allaient mettre fin à la guerre. Ils l'ont fait pour une raison : pour être capable de servir leur nation.

M. Côté, comme le restant du 22^e et le restant de l'armée canadienne qui a fait le temps durant la guerre de 1939 à 1945 à différentes places en Europe, en Afrique et d'autres, a reconnu après la guerre que ce qu'ils ont fait était si important pour notre démocratie—une nation très nouvelle, une nation de peut-être 70 ans dans le temps et une nation qui a réalisé que la démocratie est quelque chose qu'il faut défendre, même si ça veut dire au coût de la vie. M. Côté était une de ces personnes-là qui ont

réalisé jusqu'à quel point ce qu'ils avaient fait durant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale était important.

Je veux dire qu'ici à l'Assemblée législative, la section ontarienne de l'association parlementaire francophone de l'Ontario va, le 22 avril de cette année, le recevoir dans l'Ordre de la Pléiade comme commandant. C'est l'honneur le plus haut qu'on peut donner comme assemblée parlementaire francophone et je suis très content que cette Assemblée a décidé de faire ça avant que M. Côté ne décède.

Et on dit à la famille de M. Côté : c'était votre père, c'était votre grand-père et quelqu'un qui va vous manquer grandement, mais sachez qu'il va aussi manquer à l'Ontario et au Canada, qui vont toujours se rappeler qu'il était Ernest Côté.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As part of the unanimous consent, we are all asked to stand for a moment of silence. Everyone in the House, please rise for a moment of silence in memory of Ernest Côté.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition, I thank all members for their respectful, heartfelt and powerful statements. We will collect those in hard copy and make those available to the family of Ernest Côté.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Last Thursday, we learned that the Sudbury police services board had contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to seek guidance.

Premier, we've asked the commission for an investigation into the alleged bribery. Shouldn't you be doing the same? Shouldn't you be asking the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to conduct an investigation into the actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr.? Premier, why have you fallen silent on Mr. Loughheed's inappropriate behaviour and alleged bribery?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said many times in this House, there is an investigation ongoing. It is an investigation that's taking place outside of this House. I would say to the member opposite that the police services board is responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in their municipalities. Police services boards are not directed by me or by this House. So we need to let the police services board take action as it sees fit. We need to let the investigation unfold outside this Legislature, which is where it's appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The Ontario Civilian Police Commission has said that all police services board members have an obligation to respect and uphold the law. Gerry Loughheed Jr. has not, apparently, lived up to his obligations as chair of the Sudbury police

services board—I think all of us can agree with that—so much so that his colleagues on the board are now distancing themselves from him. Unlike the Premier, they don't want to be dragged down with him when he falls.

Premier, by order in council, you have the power to revoke Mr. Lougheed's appointment. Why won't you remove him from the Sudbury police services board until the OPP investigations are complete?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Unlike the member opposite, I actually trust the system. I trust the people who are part of the police services board. I trust the people who are undertaking the investigation that is taking place outside of this House.

I would just go back to that initial comment. I think it's very important that we trust the people who have been put in positions and who have responsibilities that are not directed by the politics of what goes on in this House. Those investigations are happening outside. The police services board will make its decision based on its very good capacity to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Premier, the commission has said board members should act with the "highest levels of honesty and integrity." It should not take criminal charges or convictions to prove Mr. Lougheed Jr. fell below that standard; it simply takes listening to Mr. Olivier's recordings. So when will you demonstrate integrity and remove Mr. Lougheed Jr. from the board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci, monsieur le Président. Police services boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services in municipalities. Among their duties, police services boards generally determine objectives and priorities with respect to police services in their jurisdictions.

So, about the question that was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I understand that the Sudbury police services board has discussed this matter and has contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. They shared their findings, and the OCPC shared their findings and comments from the community. The OCPC is authorized, under section 25 of the Police Services Act, to investigate, inquire into and report on the conduct of a member of the police service board if requested.

1100

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, to the Premier: Premier, over and over again you have claimed the investigation into Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Pat Sorbara was independent and not taking place in this House, and you said it again today a couple of times. Yet, when asked about possible OPP charges against Pat Sorbara, on at least five occasions now you have said, "We don't expect it to happen."

Premier, why are you trying to influence the OPP investigation by saying that you don't think the OPP will lay charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say again that I take this matter very seriously. The investigation is happening outside of this House and I have been clear that we need to let that investigation unfold.

I would say respectfully to the member opposite, the fact that he stands up and asks question after question suggests that he would like to investigate the matter in this House, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very inappropriate when he knows full well that the investigation is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —happening independent of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier. Premier, when asked about former deputy education minister, Ben Levin, you said, "This is a case that is before the courts; I cannot comment on any of the aspects of the case." When asked about the OPP investigation into deleted gas plant documents, you said, "Unfortunately, I am not able to comment further."

Premier, why do you now feel that it is acceptable for you to comment on this particular OPP investigation into the bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is beyond rich that the member opposite, and, quite frankly, both parties, want commentary on every single aspect of this matter. I have said over and over again that this investigation is happening outside of this House.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order—second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear. I made a statement two Fridays ago about my position. I said what I believed was the case, and I will stand by that. But the investigation is happening outside of this House, not in this Legislature during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier. Premier, as the chief executive of this province, your words hold a lot of weight and your actions even more so. It's unethical for you to share your thoughts with law enforcement officials about how you expect their independent investigation to play out. When you said that you didn't expect charges against Pat Sorbara, you crossed the line.

So I ask you: Why did you feel it was appropriate to deviate from your standard "no comment" position and actually profess an opinion on whether charges will be laid against your deputy chief of staff? Why is this criminal investigation any different than any of the others?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the member opposite and his colleagues have asked questions over and over again to which they claim they want answers. I have done my utmost to say what I believe, to talk about my

position and to then say—and I will say this repeatedly—there is an investigation going on. It's happening outside of this House. It is not the business of this Legislature to undertake that investigation. It is happening independent of this Legislature. I think the member opposite knows that and yet he continues to ask questions that suggest that he's not respecting the fact that this investigation is happening outside the Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has been asked who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their instructions. She won't answer—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Beaches–East York, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has been asked for any evidence of her version of the Sudbury bribery scandal. She doesn't have any.

It speaks volumes that the Premier keeps ducking these questions. Does she have anything to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have said repeatedly that I take this very seriously. I made a statement two Fridays ago that is in the public realm. I've been very, very clear that I will continue to co-operate fully with the authorities, as will Pat Sorbara, and that that investigation is happening outside of this Legislature, not here in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's newest MPP was asked what he thought about the Olivier calls from Sorbara and Lougheed. He said those calls were “a negotiation.” Federal prosecutors say, “It is a crime to negotiate in any way about an appointment to any public office or government job.”

Gerry Lougheed thought he was negotiating to get Andrew Olivier out of the way. Pat Sorbara was negotiating. Even the Premier's candidate called this a negotiation. Whose version is correct, the Premier's or her member for Sudbury's?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are not holding the investigation in this Legislature.

I just want to say again how pleased I am that Glenn Thibeault is our member for Sudbury. He, like all of us—when we're asked a question, we attempt to answer it. But on this, the fact is that the investigation that both the interim Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party want so desperately to happen inside this Legislature actually is happening independent of the Legislature, outside of this House, where it belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's review. The Premier said that the appointment was a done deal, but Andrew Olivier told police investigators that Glenn Thibeault was still holding out hope that he would be nominated. He

told Olivier that he was not looking to take the appointment.

So I go back to the same question, again to the Premier: Whose version is correct, the Premier's version or the member for Sudbury's version?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I think it's very important that we put our trust in the authorities to ask the questions of all of the people they choose to ask questions of, and to conduct the investigation outside of this Legislature. It's not for this House to do that. It's not for this House to determine what the questions would be and who would ask them.

We're going to let the investigation—which is independent—unfold outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Gerry Lougheed says that the Premier didn't want to make an appointment because she wanted a nomination process. When did the Premier decide to offer Andrew Olivier a position so that the Premier's chosen candidate could have an uncontested nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party is going to try to come at this many, many different ways. She knows full well that I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury because I truly believed, and I continue to believe, that Glenn Thibeault is a very strong voice for Sudbury, and that it's a very good thing that he's here sitting in our Legislature.

He believes that the plan we are implementing—the plan to invest in people, to invest in their talents and skills, to invest in infrastructure, to make sure that people have security in their retirement—is important work, that that is the work we need to be doing: to have a poverty reduction strategy; to make sure that we do everything we can to help people in this province and to build the province up. That's why Glenn Thibeault ran for us. That's why he's here, and we're very, very happy that he is with us on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Who told Gerry Lougheed and who told Pat Sorbara to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There is an investigation happening outside of this House. That's where it belongs. It's independent. The Public Prosecution Service of Canada has been retained. It is an independent process, and we are going to let that process unfold outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, apparently Gerry Lougheed did not know there would be no nomination. Pat Sorbara apparently did not know there would be no nomination. Andrew Olivier apparently did not know there would be no nomination. So who did the Premier tell, other than her soul, that there would be no nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, I've made it clear that I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury. He's a fine, fine voice for the people of Sudbury, and we're very glad to have him here.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The investigation that is taking place is taking place outside of this House. Whatever the leader of the third party desires, it's taking place outside of this House.

1110

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've said, "I will fully co-operate with the authorities." You've said you will continue to work with the authorities. Working and co-operating with the authorities shouldn't include publicly stating your expected outcome of the case. I thought you always said it was not appropriate to comment on open cases. Premier, aside from your public statements, have you and your lawyers talked to the OPP regarding the alleged bribery case?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I was very, very upfront and open. Two Fridays ago, I made a statement about my position. I said that the investigation was going to take place, it would take place outside of the Legislature and that we would co-operate with all of the authorities. That remains my position.

But did I have a position? Absolutely. My position was that Glenn Thibeault would be the best candidate for the Liberals in Sudbury.

I think the people of Sudbury have spoken. They made a decision. We're very happy to have Glenn Thibeault with us here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Premier, you have said that the duties of the deputy chief of staff in your office are separate from the ongoing investigation. I would say that the investigation is actually in your office, because both you and Ms. Sorbara have been asked to sit down with OPP investigators. Premier, have either of those interviews taken place, and did they take place at Queen's Park?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear that I and my staff will co-operate fully with the authorities. That is what we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has insisted for some weeks now that she decided last November to appoint her candidate for the Sudbury by-election. For weeks now, New Democrats have asked over and over for evidence to back up her claim.

Now, section 11.8 of the Ontario Liberal Party constitution says that the Liberal leader can appoint a candidate

over any objection. But it goes on to say, "The leader shall communicate his or her intention to make such appointment as soon as possible, and in writing, to the nomination commissioner and to the president of the constituency association."

Can the Premier provide this House with a copy of the letter she sent to both the nomination commissioner of her party and the president of the Sudbury riding association?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, there is an investigation that is going on outside of this House. The member for Timmins—James Bay is not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Timmins—James Bay, to the best of my knowledge, is not part of that investigative process. It is independent of this House, and it will take place outside of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The public has a right to the evidence, as this assembly does. My question is—Bill Nurmi, the head of the local riding association, told the Sudbury Star that it wasn't until Monday, December 15, that he learned the Liberal plan to appoint your choice candidate. So, clearly, he had not received a letter from you until sometime after December 15.

When did the Premier send Bill Nurmi, then president of the Sudbury riding association, a letter advising him of your decision to appoint your hand-picked candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this may be the first time that the Liberal Party constitution has formed the foundation of a question from the NDP. We, in the Liberal Party, have annual general meetings where we debate constitutional changes. The members of the Ontario Liberal Party have decided that the leader ought to have the power to appoint, unlike in the NDP.

I think the experience in Scarborough—Guildwood demonstrated that sometimes the right thing to do for everyone is to be clear about who you want your candidate to be, to appoint that candidate, rather than go through a sham process, as existed in Scarborough—Guildwood.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. As a former public health nurse, and as a public school trustee in the city of Toronto, I know the importance of delivering an evidence-based health and physical education curriculum.

Minister, last week you released an updated health and physical education curriculum. The one reason for developing this new curriculum is to keep our children healthy and safe. It is the most consulted piece of curriculum in Ontario history, yet there are some who continue to make false claims about the curriculum and what it entails. Last week, the Conservative member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Ms. Gallant, brought the

debate to a new low. She stated in the House of Commons that the new curriculum was grooming children for exploitation and was written with intent to harm children.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you please explain to the House how the updated health and physical education curriculum will keep our children healthy and safe?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for the question.

First off, the statements made by Cheryl Gallant, the Conservative Ontario MP, are false and misleading, and should be condemned by every member of this House. The health and phys-ed curriculum is dangerously out of date and needed to be updated. It is the most consulted piece of curriculum in Ontario history.

The federal Conservatives' irresponsible comments should be especially condemned by the official opposition, who are in complete disarray over their position on Ontario's updated curriculum. As I said last week, the PC education critic says one thing, and we have all three leadership candidates saying the opposite thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for the response. As a former public health nurse in the former city of Toronto, I've seen first-hand the importance of delivering a current and relevant health and physical education curriculum. Having taught the course, called Changing Me, for a number of years, I heard many diverse sexuality questions from children as young as grade 3.

There has been a lot of misinformation out there about the new, revised health and physical education curriculum. Again, Ms. Gallant, MP, said, "If withdrawal of this Liberal policy can prevent one child from being groomed for exploitation, it really must be withdrawn."

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please explain to the House how the updated curriculum is one of the most consulted curriculums in the history of Ontario education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of students who need accurate, up-to-date information.

This is the most consulted curriculum in Ontario history. Consultations involved parents, teachers, medical and health professionals, and students themselves. We consulted with parents in every corner of the province. Approximately 4,000 parents were given an opportunity to provide their input. A parent in every elementary school across Ontario and from all four publicly funded school boards was provided with an opportunity to provide input.

Our government's top priority is the health and safety of our children, and we heard from parents, teachers, students and organizations that there is a need for an updated curriculum which provides accurate information. Parents understand this, and it's why Cheryl Gallant's statements—statements that, frankly, I think are disgusting—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —should be condemned by—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week we learned that Gerry Lougheed has raised over \$100,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm doing it. Come to order.

Member, continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Gerry Lougheed has raised over \$100,000 for Justin Trudeau and your federal cousins. Now, since this Sudbury bribery scandal broke, the federal Liberals have cut him loose, but they're keeping the money. It is clear that Liberals will take money no matter who raises it.

Premier, will you tell us how much money Gerry Lougheed has raised for the provincial Liberals, and if you have any intent of returning any of that ill-gotten gain?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, hope sprang eternal. I thought that the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was going to stand up and distance himself from the comments of his federal riding-mate. He just sprang up out of his seat, and I thought that's what was going to happen—which would have been a laudable thing for him to do, because the comments of his federal counterpart were truly beneath the dignity of a member of the House of Commons.

1120

Again, I will say that the matter that the member is referencing is part of an investigation that's happening outside of this House. We're going to let that investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, perhaps you are so adamantly defending Gerry Lougheed because he's worth more to you driving the bus than being put under it.

Premier, if you refuse to give numbers about how much Gerry Lougheed has poured into your party coffers, perhaps you can answer this: Don't your actions of defending a Liberal bagman under criminal investigation clearly show that your party and you, as a leader, are willing to put their own economic self-interests ahead of the people of Ontario and, in fact, the rule of law?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. He knows that if he wants to get information about money that is raised, that information is disclosed publicly, as it is for all of the parties. He can look at that information largely because of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —we brought in about transparency and the disclosure of information. As far as—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to close, Mr. Speaker, I will say there is an investigation going on. We will co-operate with the authorities. It's happening outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. In 2013, Paul Godfrey, a well-known PC and provincially appointed chair of the OLG, had different ideas on the future of the Ontario gaming industry than Premier Wynne. So, on May 16, 2013, the Premier decided to get rid of him and sign an order in council that effectively unappointed Paul Godfrey two years before his contract ended. But Gerry Loughheed Jr., a long-time Liberal and subject of police investigations, is still a provincially appointed member of the Sudbury police board.

Will the Premier stop protecting her friends and sign an order in council to take Gerry Loughheed off the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just for a brief moment, I thought maybe the question was going in a different direction and it was going to be a question about something else, Mr. Speaker.

However, I will say again that the police services boards in this province are responsible in their municipalities for the provision of adequate and effective police services. They operate in their municipalities and they operate very well. I have a lot of faith in the police services boards in the province—as I have faith in the authorities that are undertaking the investigation outside of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Gerry Loughheed is facing not one, but two police investigations for offering Andrew Olivier a job on behalf of the Premier, to get the nominated candidate out of the way, yet he is still on the Sudbury police services board.

We all know the Premier has the power to remove him. She's done so in the past. Will the Premier do the right thing and remove Gerry Loughheed from the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Speaker, I understand that the Sudbury police services board addressed this issue recently and voted for Monsieur Loughheed to retain his position. Also, I understand that the Sudbury police services board has discussed this matter and has contacted the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. They shared their findings and comments from the community mem-

bers, and the OCPC is proceeding. So let's let this process unfold.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. My constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries are well aware of the vital role of Ontario's aerospace sector and what it does to our larger economy. Indeed, many of us are employed in these highly skilled jobs. In fact, chances are that if you're taking off or landing in a plane in Ontario, at least part of that plane's landing gear was manufactured in my community of Cambridge.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that's making targeted, strategic investments that are strengthening key Ontario industries, like investments in our aerospace industry. Last week, the minister and I were in Cambridge, making an announcement in partnership with Héroux-Devtek, an emerging aerospace manufacturer with new, state-of-the-art facilities in Cambridge. Would the minister please inform the House about our government's partnership with Héroux-Devtek?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to commend the member not just for her question but for the great job she did at that announcement. She really has done a fantastic job in that community.

The news we were able to announce was great news for Cambridge and great news for Ontario's aerospace sector. Héroux-Devtek will be investing \$54 million in a brand new, state-of-the-art aerospace landing-gear facility right in Cambridge. That is 40 new jobs, 50 existing jobs that are going to be supported directly by that, helping to strengthen the 250 core people.

This is what Gilles Labbé, CEO of Héroux-Devtek, had to say when asked, "Why Cambridge?" Because of (1) the most talented workforce anywhere in North America and (2), the strong partnership with the province of Ontario that helped us beat out Quebec and helped us beat out potential American locations. We won this contract working as a team, and we're really proud—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the minister for not only his response but for coming to Cambridge to announce this important project in my community. I truly enjoyed my time and tour at Héroux-Devtek last week.

This announcement is part of the larger positive economic trend in my region. To remind the House, the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo region's unemployment rate is 5.7%, well below the national average of 6.6%. In the past year, we have seen the unemployment rate in my region decrease by 0.9%. We've also seen 2,800 new jobs come to the Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo region in the past year alone. I'm encouraged that Héroux-Devtek is part of Cambridge's economic momentum.

Would the minister please update the House on the status of the aerospace industry in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I am very pleased to do that, because the aerospace sector really is one of the fastest-growing sectors anywhere in North America. Ontario really has become very competitive globally when it comes to aerospace. The Ontario-Montreal aerospace corridor has become very globally significant.

In fact, our aerospace industry revenues were \$5.3 billion in 2013. That's an impact on our GDP of \$3 billion. That's very significant. It employs close to 17,000 Ontarians, and it's a great exporter. It exports 80% of its finished products. Ontario is home to 14 of the top 25 global aerospace companies.

Something that really excites me, too, is that we're investing in our talent. We've just recently partnered with Centennial College, where we're putting forward a great partnership that's producing even better state-of-the-art, competitive, next-generation workers, something we're very proud of.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last week you chose to deflect question after question on your involvement in offering jobs to get your own candidate to step aside in the Sudbury by-election.

You keep saying your office has been exonerated, but that's not what the Chief Electoral Officer said. He said, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act...."

Why do you keep insisting your office has been exonerated when the trial hasn't started yet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite is not reflecting what I have said. What I said, and I've said it repeatedly, is that Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. I've said that over and over again.

Then I went on to quote from the Chief Electoral Officer, who said clearly, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." That is what the Chief Electoral Officer has said.

The Chief Electoral Officer has now passed on the process to the next phase. We need to let that investigation unfold outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1130

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Premier: Now the police are examining these apparent contraventions to the Election Act, but you seem to be trying to influence their investigation. It would be naive to suggest your comments in the media have no effect on the investigation. Why won't you simply let the Ontario Provincial Police conduct their investigation, free of interference?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's exactly what I've been saying over and over again. We want the authorities to do their investigation outside of this Legislature.

Quite frankly, were I to answer in this House every question, in detail, that had been posed to me by the opposition parties, then that would be inappropriate. That's why I've said that the investigation is happening outside of this House. We need to let the authorities do their work.

LIBERAL PARTY STAFF

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. We all know Rob Ford's former chief of staff has experience slashing budgets and cutting services, but he also knows a thing or two about politicians under police investigation.

Did the Premier hire the new director of the Liberal Party for his experience cutting budgets and slashing services, or his experience with Project Traveller and Project Brazen 2?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't see the way in which that is a question of government policy. But let me just say I also think that it is really beneath the dignity of members in this House to cast aspersions on staff members who are simply trying to do their work.

The staff member that the member opposite is referencing has worked with the Liberal Party for many, many years. He's a man who I respect very much, and he has experience that will benefit the Liberal Party of Ontario. We're very glad to have Earl Provost on board.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Rob Ford cut transit, he cut libraries, he cut environmental programs, he cut parks and he cut social services—oh, and the police were investigating him too. Earl Provost helped steer the mayor through all of that.

Did the Premier hire Rob Ford's chief of staff to help her slash services in Ontario or to help her with the four OPP anti-rackets investigations into the Liberal government of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows full well that her party ran on a platform that would have cut \$600 million more than was any part of our fiscal plan.

Again, I say to the member opposite that in the same way the member opposite and her party determine who their staff are going to be—whether it's Jonah Schein or Paul Ferreira, people who have been past candidates—we determine on this side when we think there are people who really share our values system and who understand the organization of the party. We believe Earl Provost is going to be a very strong asset to the party.

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Ma question s'adresse au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées. Minister, Ontario is home to almost two million people over the age of 65, and by 2036, that number is projected to more than double. In my riding of Burlington, nearly one in five citizens is a senior, and issues related to their

safety and well-being are ones of common interest and concern.

As the number of seniors in our society grows, the number of seniors reporting incidents of abuse is also at risk of increasing. In fact, research has found that between 4% and 10% of seniors may experience some form of abuse from someone in a position of authority or trust at some point in their later years.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to commend the minister for his continued work in fighting for the safety and dignity of older adults in our province. Would the minister please inform this Legislature of the steps our government is taking in order to ensure that seniors in our province are safe and protected?

L'hon. Mario Sergio: Merci beaucoup pour une très bonne question, parfaite pour aujourd'hui.

Interjection.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Oui, certainement.

Speaker, I'm very proud indeed that we were the first government in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse, establishing a zero-tolerance policy as well. Since 2003, we invested more than \$9 million in elder abuse prevention and awareness programs.

I have to say as well that as the result of the 2010 retirement homes authority, retirement homes are now required to take a number of unprecedented steps to protect our seniors. They must, among many other things, obtain a licence and post the seniors' bill of rights.

Elder abuse is not acceptable, it's not condoned, it's not tolerated and it must stop—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Mario Sergio: —our government and it's our goal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the minister for his response. It's great to hear how committed our government is to supporting our growing seniors' population, especially when it comes to their safety. That is why I'm pleased to hear of all the initiatives our government is taking towards ensuring the safety and well-being of my senior constituents.

In a recent visit to my riding, the minister had the opportunity to visit our dynamic seniors' centre and meet with seniors in our community in addition to those working to ensure their well-being. Last year, I was pleased to host a round table on seniors' issues that included caregivers and members of our law enforcement community.

One of the great initiatives that's being developed and is in fact now developed is the OPP's province-wide seniors' Crime Stoppers initiative, an interactive and bilingual DVD for presentations to seniors on topics such as fraud, elder abuse and neglect. This is now utilized by local Crime Stoppers programs across our province.

Minister, could you please expand on the ways in which we are continuing to safeguard Ontario seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Merci pour votre question. Indeed, the member is very passionate speaking on behalf of our seniors.

We are working tirelessly and passionately to create a secure and supportive environment for seniors. We know that it is only through education, training, collaboration and coordination of services that we will make this goal a reality.

Our elder abuse strategy has three particular parts: coordination of community services, training of front-line staff and workers, and public education to raise awareness.

Our own Ontario Provincial Police has a mandatory training program on elder abuse for some 50 to 100 of its forces. We also provide some \$50,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly to gather more data.

Let me say that we, as a government in Ontario, care for our seniors and strive to provide the best living environment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. I have received a number of phone calls and emails from my constituents who are fed up with your government's scandals. They are outraged by your government's actions during the Sudbury by-election and have asked that you and your party be held accountable for what happened.

Premier, how do you expect any of us to trust you when you've made it clear that no one will be held accountable for what happened in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, there is an investigation going on. The authorities are doing what they need to do to complete an investigation. In fact, that's a process that I hope the member opposite would point his constituents to, to make sure they understand that there is an investigation going on, that it's not happening in this House, but it's happening with people who actually have the responsibility for that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, I do point that out to my constituents. I tell them there are four investigations going on, not just one.

This government is now under its fourth OPP investigation. There is no excuse for that, though they've certainly tried every one in the book. It's time for the Premier to stop putting political gain ahead of doing what's right.

Premier, will you take the first step in rebuilding the trust you've lost and demand that those who are responsible for this mess step down from their public duties?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been clear that we will co-operate with the authorities. The investigation is taking place outside of this House. I made a public statement two Fridays ago. I made it clear that Pat Sorbara, if there are charges, will step aside. The police services board is an independent body and the authorities are undertaking an investigation outside of this Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Just in from the TSN TradeCentre: Premier, in light of the all the draft picks being traded in the NHL today, can you confirm that Andrew Olivier was given one job offer and future considerations in exchange for the Liberal nomination in Sudbury?

1140

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It was at least an interesting preamble.

Again, I have said repeatedly that there's an investigation happening. It's happening outside of this House, not in the Legislature. We're going to let the authorities do their work, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Premier, when was the decision made to offer a job to Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, there is an investigation happening. It's happening outside of this House. I have been clear that we will work with the authorities. I made a statement two Fridays ago. We're going to let that investigation unfold.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board.

Minister, youth unemployment has been a challenge in our province over the past few years, and I know this is an issue that concerns the constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre. I thank you very much for visiting my riding last Friday, where you spent many hours listening to stakeholders who shared their concerns with you.

Making sure that graduates and young professionals have the tools that they need to succeed is very important. It ensures a strong workforce and a strong economy.

I recall last year that the Ontario public service was chosen as one of Canada's Top Employers for Young People, and that's for the second year in a row. We know that the OPS has a strong record of supporting the professional development of young Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain to this House the ways in which the OPS has made youth employment a priority?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for the question and also for hosting me at a very interesting day of meeting with stakeholders on Friday.

The Ontario public service does indeed have a strong record in providing employment programs to students, recent graduates, at-risk youth and internationally trained young professionals across the province. Ontario's employment programs for youth and new professionals promote the OPS as an employer of first choice and help to revitalize the aging workforce.

In 2013-14, the OPS provided close to 6,000 paid employment experiences for youth and new professionals, including 5,200 positions for summer students in minis-

tries and community agencies. These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to youth employment and training the next generation for important responsibilities in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thanks to the minister for her answer.

I did hear a comment from the other side of the House about where the meetings took place. Three of our meetings that day were in Kitchener Centre, for the record.

I know that families in my riding and across the province, for that matter, do appreciate the opportunities being made available to young people by the Ontario public service. We've all heard time and again about the challenges that young people face while they're looking for a good summer job, and then after graduation what it's like trying to find meaningful employment, so I'm pleased to hear that the OPS offers so many opportunities for young people to develop their professional skills and to build their resumés.

Minister, can you please give this House and my constituents in Kitchener Centre more insights on the employment programs that the Ontario public service offers to young people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to speak about some of these programs, and I'm sure members on all sides of the House will want to know about this to support their constituents.

The Ontario Internship Program hires recent graduates into occupational areas in which current and future skill shortages have been identified.

Newcomers to Canada have an opportunity to gain Canadian work experience through the paid OPS internship program for internationally trained individuals and the OPS internship program for internationally trained engineers.

The OPS learn and work program continues to provide work experience for up to 140 at-risk youth per year in priority communities across Ontario. Through that program, high school students are able to earn credits toward their diploma.

For young people across the province, employment experience programs help ensure they develop the skills they need to lead to successful careers.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, used the following quote in her online biography: "Never retreat, never explain, never apologize—get the thing done and let them howl."

Unfortunately, she's taken that a step too far in the Sudbury by-election. In fact, it reflects her lack of political ethics. Now she's under OPP investigation for bribery.

Premier, will you continue to let Pat Sorbara never explain, never apologize and continue to retreat instead

of demanding her to step down during this criminal investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite understands that that quote is from Nellie McClung, who, quite frankly, is a role model for all women who have worked to get into positions of influence that have traditionally been positions held by men. I think that we can all respect the heritage of someone like Nellie McClung. She worked so hard and she didn't back down. She fought for her place in the politics of this country and this province. I have a great respect for the work that Nellie McClung did.

Pat Sorbara is a woman who understands that the history of our democracy includes not respecting the position of women, and that's something we need to fight for and continue to fight for.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I would ask some members to have their dialogues while question-and-answer period is going on—just to carry it somewhere else.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: I always respect the role of women in politics at every level, but what I can't respect is the legacy that Pat Sorbara is casting upon your entire government. In fact, I find Sorbara's online bravado absolutely outrageous because she's just taking it too far.

Currently, your sorry government is under OPP investigation, as we know, for four separate incidents. You definitely have made history, Premier, sadly, as one of the most criminally investigated governments in Ontario. There's really only one way to go from here. Redeem yourself. Take the high road. Walk the path that Nellie McClung has developed and led on. Integrity is long overdue from your leadership.

Will you be a Premier and tell Sorbara to resign today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will continue to work in the best interests of the people of this province. The work that we're doing, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the job opportunities that are being provided for young people—our Minister of Children and Youth Services commented that her very first summer job was a government of Ontario job. That's extremely important work. There are young people today who are thinking about what they are going to do in the summer, and those summer jobs will start to inform their career paths and their lives going forward. That's extremely important work. Those investments are critical.

In fact, we're developing new programs. The youth employment fund that we put in place has helped 30,000 young people to find placement in a job. That has, in 80% of the cases, led to a permanent job. That work is critical. That's why we're in government, Mr. Speaker. That's the plan that we're implementing, and I hope the member opposite can work with us on those very—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Earlier, New Democrats asked you the question: When did you send the letter as per your constitution both to your nomination commissioner and to Bill Nurmi, the president of the riding association? It's clear from the public record that the riding association president didn't find out—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford will come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —about the appointment until after December 15. I ask you again, when did you send the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, third time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —letter to the nomination commissioner or to the president of the riding association that you would be not following a nomination process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My colleagues and I welcome the member opposite to come and join our party and be part of our AGM and vote on our policies; likewise, if he'd like to bring the NDP constitution, because we'd be happy to give them some advice on running real nominations as opposed to sham nominations.

The fact is there is an investigation going on about a specific situation in Sudbury. We're going to let that investigation unfold. We're not going to do that in this House. It's an independent process. We're going to leave it as an independent process.

1150

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again to the Premier: You refuse to answer the question. The question is a very simple one. According to your constitution, the leader of the party has to send a letter at some time to both the riding association president and the nomination commissioner of the Liberal Party.

I ask you again: When did you send that letter and when will you make it public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My colleagues are talking about Adam Giambrone and what kind of letters he got, and the candidate who was there. I don't have the answers to those questions.

But what I know is that there is an investigation going on into the matter in Sudbury. That investigation is independent. It's happening outside of this House. We will co-operate with the authorities, but we need to let that investigation happen outside of this House.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thought I would try something a little different here. My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Speaker, it's hard to think of the province of Ontario without our Great Lakes. We use them for drinking water. We use them for food. We use them for electricity, for transportation, for recreation. In fact, including my home city of Mississauga and, of course, our sister city of Brampton, some 80% of Ontarians get their drinking water from the Great Lakes.

Everyone has got memories of being out on the Great Lakes, enjoying sailing in the summer, fishing all-around—and they're not the only ones. The Great Lakes are a commercial entity as well. Our Great Lakes fisheries are worth some \$200 million annually. As a whole, Ontario's Great Lakes basin contains 40% of Canada's economic activity.

Now, Minister, studies have been showing that population growth, chemicals, invasive species and so on are changing the Great Lakes. Would the minister please inform the House on the actions that our government has taken to protect the Great Lakes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is one of the matters that Ontarians actually do care about and want to hear questions about in this House.

I was just talking with my friend from Mississauga—Streetsville and my friend from Ottawa—Orléans, because we're getting a lot of letters from young kids about microbeads, about invasive species, pharmaceuticals. Ontarians are very concerned about the future of one of our most visible and important resources and really want the government to act and I think want the opposition to hold the government accountable for acting on this, which is why we have presented this very, very important piece of legislation that will enable communities, First Nations, farmers, businesses, environmental and labour groups to come together to protect our Great Lakes and to establish plans that can be implemented locally.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, Minister, you make a good point on how important the Great Lakes are to our ecosystem, to our economy and to our well-being as Ontarians. Protecting those Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin is going to enhance the quality of life for all Ontario families and, more importantly, ensure a dynamic, green economy for future generations.

Now, Minister, this is the third time Ontario has introduced a proposed Great Lakes Protection Act in this Legislature. All members on all sides will recognize the importance of strong action to support the Great Lakes, which keep our economy competitive, and they're so important to each and every one of us.

This House, all of us, would like to know how the proposed Great Lakes act has been strengthened from previous versions. Minister, would you please talk to the House about how the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act will keep our Great Lakes strong and vibrant now and for future generations?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This bill has been around for a long time; one could call it the Jurassic Park of legislation. I know the member for Mississauga—Streetsville

knows the Great Lakes have been around for more than 6,000 years.

It's always important when you're talking about the Great Lakes and pollution that we actually understand the importance of science in these particular kinds of things because the government actually has over 221 projects in local communities, in all parties' constituencies, that are leading in best practices in cleaning up our lakes and creating economic opportunities from them.

We have committed to \$50 million a year, and I hope all members of the Legislature will vote for this bill once this bill moves forward. The guardians' steward council will then have access to funds, as will all members. I would encourage every member to talk to your local communities to take advantage of this government initiative, because that's where the best solutions come from.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is back to the Premier. Premier, earlier in question period today, I asked you two very simple questions. You talked about participating and co-operating with the authorities. I would like to know, and I think Ontarians would like to know, have you or your lawyers met with the OPP? When did you meet with them, and did you meet with them here at Queen's Park?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think what is important is that the people of Ontario know that there is an investigation going on, that it's happening outside of this House and that I and my staff will co-operate fully with the authorities. I think that's very, very important. I have said that over and over again. I said it publicly in my statement two Fridays ago, and I will continue to say it in this House in answer to questions. There is an investigation going on. It is not happening in this House. I will, and my staff will, co-operate fully with the authorities. We need to let that investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, Premier, again, I was at your press conference a couple of Fridays ago. Clearly, you inserted yourself into the investigation with your comments. It's a very simple question, Premier: Have you met with the OPP—yes or no? Did you meet with them here—yes or no? It's a simple question. Answer the question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that on the one hand, the member opposite seems to think that it was inappropriate for me to make a statement publicly, and, on the other hand, the member opposite wants me to answer more questions and he wants me to answer questions of detail about the investigation. I'm not going to do that.

The fact is, there is an investigation going on. We will co-operate fully with the authorities. That investigation is not happening in question period. It's not happening in this Legislature. It's happening outside the House, and we will let it unfold as it should.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In my answer to the leader of the official opposition, I said the OCPD shared their findings and comments. It's the Sudbury police services board that shared their comments. I want to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's a point of order. People are allowed to correct their record.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In my question, I mentioned the nominated candidate. I meant to say the previously nominated candidate, Andrew Olivier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

ESTIMATES

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the year ending March 31, 2015, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, February 27, 2015.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm pleased to welcome Steve McHugh, Bert Pavese, Dave Elines, Bob Lapchuk, Ian Pearson, Ken Houghton, John Beechey, Alfred Mungra, Gerry Ireland, Kevin Murty, Ken McLean, Robin Saini and Mark Garcia. These are all Steelworkers on strike at Crown Holdings. Mr. Elines and Mr. Pavese found little Elijah Marsh when they and all the strikers joined the search over a week ago. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHNEIDERS

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I stand to recognize the enduring legacy left by the dedicated employees who, after 90 years of providing high-quality cold cuts from Kitchener's Courtland Avenue, have marked the end of an era. I speak, of course, of Kitchener's landmark Schneiders meat plant, an icon as recognizable as the smiling Dutch girl's face that looks out toward the 401 near Guelph.

When the last pack of baloney rolled off the line Thursday, it marked the final chapter of a century-long

success story born in the kitchen of John Metz Schneider's home. After building a door-to-door reputation for high-quality meats, J.M. Schneider opened the Courtland Avenue plant in 1925 to become one of Kitchener-Waterloo's biggest and best employers.

More than just a famous brand, the Schneiders meat plant was a way of life where loyalty and hard work were rewarded with good-paying, secure jobs. Workers and employers were a tight-knit family that worked and played and grew together. While the Dutch girl continues to smile, there are tears as we recognize all that has been lost with the Schneiders closure: the teams, the picnics, the up to 1,800 employees heading to work in the plant daily to produce a first-class product enjoyed right across Canada for close to a century.

The memories and legacy do remain, Speaker—a legacy not only preserved at the Waterloo Region Museum, but also in the hearts of those who worked at the Courtland Avenue plant with both honour and pride over the last 90 years.

To all those in the extended Schneiders family, we thank them.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I stand today once again to voice the concerns of my constituents around the health curriculum in our schools. When it comes to proper consultation, it's clear the Liberal government has not learned from previous mistakes. The lack of inclusive consultation before announcing the curriculum was disrespectful to parents in my constituency and a mistake on the Liberal government's part.

Now that the details of the curriculum have been released, the government has an obligation to continue the consultation process, not to end it. Ontario is a diverse province, and we must respect the diversity of beliefs when it comes to educating our children. Many people agree that health education is important, but my constituents have sought clarification about the age appropriateness of some materials. My constituents deserve to have their voices heard, and the government has a responsibility to address their concerns.

I've raised this issue four times now with the government. There need to be ongoing consultations where clarification can be sought and answers provided. I urge the government to sit down with parents and allow an open dialogue before implementing changes to the curriculum in September.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Arthur Potts: On Saturday morning at 3 a.m., a tragic shooting took place in my riding of Beaches–East York. The investigation is ongoing, but we do know that two young men were killed at the McDonalds on the Danforth, just east of Coxwell, and that, according to the lawyer for the shooter, the guard involved was licensed to carry the firearm.

I extend my condolences to the families of the deceased, and I acknowledge the trauma endured by the workers and patrons who witnessed this violent episode.

This shooting is an aberration in a community that is safe and vibrant.

Speaker, I often go to that McDonalds for my morning coffee as I head to the constituency office. My first campaign event was there the day the writ was dropped for last June's election. My partner Lisa's business is only a few minutes away, and her employees are regular patrons.

We have great BIAs in the neighbourhood, such as the Danforth Mosaic, the Danforth Village association and the Danforth East Community Association. They build up the Danforth and help create a family-friendly, vibrant destination for local residents and visitors.

Fantastic new eateries in the area, such as East of York, Melanie's Bistro and Local 1794—these are cropping up along the east Danforth.

In a few short months, East Lynn Park Farmers' Market will be offering delicious fresh produce, cheeses and, of course, VQA wines.

Mr. Speaker, what happened on Saturday morning was tragic but is not a reflection of our great community.

I am proud to represent a safe and flourishing part of Toronto and to support the scores of people who are working to keep it that way.

I ask you all to come to our community and visit the great shops, bars and restaurants that make the Danforth one of the most attractive places in Toronto to live and to play.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, last week I was pleased to attend the ROMA/OGRA annual conference. The conference showed what we've always known: that small and rural municipalities are outstanding advocates for the people they serve.

That's certainly true of the municipalities that I represent. They effectively presented our concerns in meetings I attended with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and the interim leader of the official opposition.

I would like to thank our municipal leaders for asking me to attend these meetings. I appreciated the opportunity to support them, and I will be following up this week with letters to the ministers we met with.

Their concerns were wide-ranging and included: cuts to infrastructure programs; municipal reporting requirements; the need to reduce red tape; property taxes; and long-term care in our area.

Over and over, municipalities have said the government is not giving them a fair shake on infrastructure funding. Small and rural municipalities, especially those that are responsible and well run, are bearing the brunt of mismanagement at the provincial level. It shows up in this government's cancellation of Connecting Links. It shows up in an OMPF formula that penalizes too many

municipalities. It's no wonder that we in Perth–Wellington are feeling squeezed at every turn.

I urge the government to reflect on the feedback it received at ROMA. I urge them to act on the recommendations we heard.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The workers at Crown Holdings have been on strike for 20 months. They've been on the picket line in the bitter cold through last winter and through this winter.

Crown is one of the largest beverage can makers in the world, and this plant is a highly profitable, highly productive plant. Yet, Crown took a bargaining position of rolling back contract conditions and permanently ensuring that all new hires would be paid at a much lower rate than the existing workers. Crown wants to make sure that younger workers would permanently have a lower standard of living. Speaker, Crown wants to break these workers. Crown wants to end the kind of society where working people can live lives of decency and respect.

The Premier, for her part, stands aside and has ignored 1,200 letters from the workers and their supporters—no response at all.

Speaker, these workers deserve our support. They deserve support from the Premier. Crown may want to break these workers. The Premier may want to ignore them. They will not be ignored, and they will not be broken. It is up to all of us to support them, to support their boycott of Crown products and to support their call for provincial action.

COMMUNITY PANCAKE BREAKFAST

DÉJEUNER COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: This past Family Day, I was proud to host my first annual Family Day pancake breakfast.

Continuing on the tradition of my predecessor, this community event was an opportunity for the residents of Ottawa–Orléans to come together and discuss issues important to them as I prepared to return to Queen's Park following a busy winter break.

1310

Residents were also asked to bring a food donation to the Orléans–Cumberland Community Resource Centre. Held at the Community Pentecostal Church, the event was a resounding success. Over 100 persons braved the minus-25 temperatures early on Family Day morning to attend this worthwhile event.

It was a good opportunity for me to engage in frank and open dialogue about what matters most for my constituents. It was truly heartwarming to hear the feedback that they are happy with the work that our government is doing to make Orléans the best place to live, work and raise your family.

J'aimerais remercier Allan Foget, de Sobeys, pour la nourriture et Gisèle Proulx, de la Ferme Proulx, pour l'excellent sirop d'érable. Un merci très sincère aux nombreux bénévoles, particulièrement Nathalie Montpetit—who shared her grandmother's pancake recipes with us—et à tous ceux qui ont participé à faire de cet événement un grand succès.

Thank you all. Merci.

PROVINCIAL CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This week, the Walkerton Golf and Curling Club will host the 2015 Best Western's Intermediate Men's and Women's Provincial Curling Championship. I know that the Brier is on this week as well, but ladies and gentlemen, at home people will be very much interested in what's going on in Walkerton.

There will be 64 athletes—eight women's teams and eight men's teams—from across the province. This championship marks the club's 90th anniversary, and organizers are hoping the public will come and help celebrate the milestone in their recently renovated club.

Volunteers have been hard at work for months preparing their club and community for this provincial-level match to ensure that curlers and spectators have a wonderful experience.

I will be attending the opening ceremony on Wednesday and, being a curling enthusiast myself, I'll be volunteering and watching, with great interest, the games as they proceed over the coming days. Throughout the tournament, the Walkerton curling club will be highlighting the healthy sport of curling in our rural area and showcasing Bruce county's Saugeen Country, with all its unique activities and sights.

Two teams from my riding of Huron-Bruce who are competing in this championship area are: From the Walkerton area, the ladies' team, consisting of Sara Almas, Tracey Schaus, Tracy Cassidy and Brenda Schumacher, will be a team to look out for. The men's team, from Paisley, consisting of Al Hutchinson, Steve Gregg, Andy McCullough and Bruce Cox, will also put up some challenging matches.

To everyone coming to Walkerton this weekend, I wish them good curling.

RAPID TRANSIT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to share with you news of a monumental project now under way in my riding of Kitchener Centre and Waterloo region. The main construction of the light rail transit system, the LRT, begins this month. The ION, as it's called, will connect the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge with a rapid electric transportation system, consisting of 22 stations along a 36-kilometre transit corridor. This is the single largest public works project in the history of my region, and I am proud that my government is supporting it. Like many people, I'm looking forward to seeing fast, efficient trains moving along our main street corridor.

Mr. Speaker, what we now face is several months of construction pain for long-term gain. Adopting this forward-thinking transportation project was challenging. There were opponents, but in the end, our regional council, keeping an eye on the future, embraced this ambitious plan. We know that ION will be a game-changer for our region. A state-of-the-art rapid transit system is going to attract people and businesses. It will spur growth and prosperity and it will also help protect our agricultural land and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As the snow melts and construction crews move in, I encourage the people of Kitchener Centre to show patience. I look forward to that very first train ride along the King Street corridor in 2017 as we unveil a new chapter in my community's history.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Today I ride in the House to speak on Black History Month. Every February, Ontarians mark Black History Month to recognize the contributions that citizens of African and Caribbean heritage have made to our province and to our country. Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for Black History Month is "Year of Sport."

To echo that sentiment, I would like to recognize several prominent black athletes of the past and the present. Mr. Speaker, Willie O'Ree was often referred to as the Jackie Robinson of ice hockey due to breaking the black colour barrier in the sport. He was the first black man to play in the national hockey league. Mr. O'Ree was 95% blind in his right eye after being hit there by an errant puck. He hid his injury—an injury that would normally have led to retirement for most players.

Willie was able to persevere through hard work and determination. Two years later, he made his NHL debut with the Boston Bruins on January 18, 1958. He is an inspiration, not only for the black community, but for all visible minorities.

Also, as a Brampton resident, I want to acknowledge Anthony Bennett, who now plays for the Minnesota Timberwolves alongside fellow Canadian Andrew Wiggins, who was subsequently selected first overall the following year.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was lucky enough to have been invited to attend the annual Black History Month concert at the Brampton Civic Centre, an event hosted by the Peel United Cultural Partners, a collaboration of the Congress of Black Women and the United Achievers' Club of Brampton. I was proud to participate in honouring a community that has given so much to the great province of Ontario.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to stand among my colleagues today to pay tribute to and thank Ontarians of African and Caribbean heritage.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

“Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

“Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

“Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

“Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients’ own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

“Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

“That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Victoria.

HOME CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition gathered by residents in Windsor and Essex county that reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Erie St. Clair Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) has historically serviced low-mild need patients;

“Whereas this level of service is critical to the Erie St. Clair CCAC home care patients who depend on it;

“Whereas reliable and robust home care is vital to enable seniors, immobile patients and citizens with special needs to live independent and rewarding lives in their own homes;

“Whereas a reduction to any level of service offered by the CCAC causes undue anxiety to home care patients and their families;

“Whereas the 33% reduction of daily home nursing visits and other service reductions announced by the Erie St. Clair CCAC compromise the health and well-being of home care patients and their families;

“Therefore the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To request that the government of Ontario reverse each and every service reduction at the Erie St. Clair CCAC.”

I agree 100% with this, will affix my name and give it to page Dhairya to take to the Clerk.

1320

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have another in a series of petitions addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I join with my dentists in wholeheartedly endorsing this and asking page Hannah to carry it.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions in support of improved winter roads maintenance from the Emsdale, Novar and Kearney area. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I support this petition and give it to Niko.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas private IT contracts cost approximately twice as much as services provided by public sector IT professionals; and

"Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario, the government spent \$703 million on private sector IT services last year; and

"Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario 2009-14, the portion of the government's IT budget going to the private sector has increased by 63% in the past five years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government reverse the privatization of IT services that can be provided in-house and save the people of Ontario \$200 million per year by cutting out unnecessary private IT contractors and allowing the OPS to provide IT services to the government of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, and I will give it to page Andrew.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the

South Bruce Grey Health Centre - Restorative Care, Chesley Site; and

"Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

"Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

"Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

"Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

"Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre - Restorative Care, Chesley Site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact."

I fully support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Vaughn.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected Mrs. Priscilla De Wit, from Dowling, in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and ask Riley to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Soliris for patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome (aHUS), an ultra-rare, chronic and life-threatening genetic condition that progressively damages vital organs, leading to heart attack, stroke and kidney failure; and

"Whereas Soliris, the first and only pharmaceutical treatment in Canada for the treatment of aHUS, has allowed patients to discontinue plasma and dialysis therapies, and has been shown to improve kidney function and enable successful kidney transplant; and

"Whereas the lack of public funding for Soliris is especially burdensome on the families of Ontario children and adults battling this catastrophic disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Instruct the Ontario government to immediately provide Soliris as a choice to patients with atypical hemolytic uremic syndrome and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Victoria.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

"Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

"Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

"Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Morgan to bring to the Clerk.

HUNTING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the greater hunting community disagrees with the decision made by the Ministry of Natural

Resources and Forestry (MNRF) to close 'McGoogan Tract' for hunting purposes;

"Whereas the MNRF did not consult with the public/hunting community on their decision to close this piece of crown land;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reopen 'McGoogan Tract' to allow hunters in the community to hunt on this piece of crown land during the hunting season."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

I am pleased to affix my name to this, and I'll send it to the table with Dhairya.

1330

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, a number of which have been brought into my office by Bryan Smith from the OPAL group in my riding, and it is:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;....

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal in landfills."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to present this petition on behalf of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further petitions.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Diane Huard in Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental" services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... :

"To do all" it can "in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

"To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Morgan to bring it to the table.

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table order in council 238-2015, appointing Brian Beamish as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Ontario.

APPOINTMENT OF FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table today order in council 237-2015, appointing Stephen LeClair as the Financial Accountability Officer of the province of Ontario.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice or debate concerning the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no, so please let me be clear. Just to make sure that the members understand this during debate, members need to be aware that the debate will be restricted to the particular ministry under consideration rather than a more wide-ranging debate on all of the business in the ministries concurrently, as they are used to.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I attended the estimates committee and was the lead on the estimates committee for the official opposition. I have to say that supply is the most fundamental of our responsibilities with our Legislative Assembly. That is the real purpose. One of the most fundamental purposes is for the government to seek consent on its expenditure program.

I'll just read one little bit here, a short paragraph from a book that I read recently: "Under the constitutional convention of responsible government, every minister of the crown must answer to the elected Legislature for the operation of the department that he or she supervises. It is the minister that is responsible for the performance and actions (or inactions) of the unelected and therefore unaccountable civil service. The concept is applicable to all ministers of the crown, including the first minister"—an important principle for us to remember during this discussion on supply.

Speaker, there are a host of questions that were asked of the Minister of Tourism, along with every other minister who came before the estimates committee. Many questions were posed; many remain unanswered. I have a list here of unanswered questions posed by the estimates committee that each and every one of those ministers refused or has so far not responded to. It is an arrogant display toward the Legislature when members of the official opposition ask questions of the appropriate minister during estimates, and they remain unanswered.

Just for everybody's recollection, the estimates committee sat in September, October and November last year. There has been plenty of time—significant amounts of time—for these questions to be responded to, and they remain unanswered.

In the Ministry of Tourism, for example, there were 21 agencies of that ministry that had failed to deliver an annual report to the minister and to this House. One of those agencies was the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. That agency had not filed an annual report with this House for over three years. The tabling of annual reports of those agencies is a statutory obligation of the government. It was as if the minister was not even aware that he had a statutory obligation, let alone any interest or effort to bring those annual reports to this House.

You can make excuses if you like. There is no reason why an agency of this government cannot file an annual report for over three years. What is going on? We saw that time and time again, not just with the Ministry of Tourism but with each and every ministry that came before estimates.

We saw the same thing with expenses. There is a statutory obligation—a piece of legislation that was much ballyhooed and introduced by this present government—to ensure that public sector expenses were filed and open to the public. They're not. We asked—we asked often—why this was. And, Speaker, we did get some excuses, but we never got any answers.

The same thing applies with the many questions that were posed to the electricity minister. Significant numbers of questions remain unanswered.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the Minister of Education.

1340

Hon. Liz Sandals: The Speaker specifically directed that all comments were to be about the Ministry of Tourism, not any other ministry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would again ask all members to confine their remarks to the subject being debated in the House, and I return to the member for Lanark, who has the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker.

We are speaking about the Ministry of Tourism and I have given examples, but I was also demonstrating that it was not unique or specific or excluded just to the Ministry of Tourism. We saw with the Minister of Tourism a complete and cavalier oversight of that ministry and the agencies. As I said, it was a pretty common refrain through our whole time in estimates committee.

Again, where are these expenses? These expenses were also demanded by statutory obligation to be not only tabled with this House but also to be on a public website so that the public could scrutinize the expenses. They're not done. In some agencies, over a year and some even upwards of two years, where they're supposed to be filed and made public every quarter, we had agencies that were over two years not filing their expenses—unacceptable; unacceptable in any light, in any fashion,

when a government that is seeking the consent of this Legislature and, by extension, the consent of people to endeavour in a spending program refuses to be held accountable, refuses to meet its own statutory obligations.

So it begs the question. Here we have today the House—the government—bringing forth concurrence in supply. They're asking this House—they must ask this House—for our concurrence. However, they still refuse to meet their obligations out of the estimates committee and answer the questions.

I ask this question: Why is this government bringing forward this concurrence motion when they haven't even fulfilled their obligations under the estimates committee? Surely each and every one of the members on the Liberal side understands that they have to do that. The purpose of estimates committees is to examine, investigate and evaluate the spending programs and the administration of those programs so that the public can have confidence that they are getting some value, or hopefully getting some value, out of these spending programs.

But here you go: Metrolinx, no expenses? Their last financial statement was 2010—

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's okay. I think I know what it is. I would draw the attention of the member again to my previous comment, which is that you have to talk about concurrences in tourism, culture and sport, not Metrolinx. The member has the floor.

Does that cover it?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, it does. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: If I'm not mistaken, Metrolinx is an agency of tourism.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, it isn't.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Okay. I'll keep going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Not to the best of my knowledge.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Anyway, with over 300 agencies, boards and commissions, I may make a mistake with one or two of them. But that agency did come up during the estimates committees.

We have 40 minutes to debate this motion on supply, 40 minutes to ask why this Liberal government has not fulfilled its obligations. Why has it not fulfilled the obligations it made to the estimates committee? Why is it not fulfilling its obligations to the people of this province? Why is it not fulfilling its obligations to this Legislature? Put this information forward and do your job and no longer act as an irresponsible government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I look forward to these types of debates because it gives us a chance that we don't often get to talk about what this Legislature is really all for and how we've established the rule of being able to make budgets in the province of Ontario.

What a lot of members don't realize is that the primary role of a Legislature is actually the appropriation of dollars. The basic reason that Legislatures today exist

dates back to some 700 or 800 years ago when, back in the day, people decided they didn't like what King John was doing and decided that they had to get some sort of rein on the monarch to be able to call his—how would you say it?—propensity for taxing people to the degree that he was.

We all know this famous document that was drafted some years ago called the Magna Carta. What it was all about was the people—in that case, the lords and knights, because it wasn't about the people at that point, but about the people who were sort of sub to the King—exerting some power over the King so that the King couldn't spend the money without the appropriation of Parliament. So we find ourselves, some 700 years later, with this process in our standing orders that is called concurrence in supply, and eventually the supply bill, and most members wouldn't know where that comes from.

I'm going to use my time in debate to talk about the process, which is perfectly within the standing orders and allowed. As I said, originally, the nobles decided that the King's powers had to be curbed in some way, so they decided at the time that what they would do was give Parliament the responsibility to be able to appropriate dollars. In other words, the King couldn't just go out and tax people without actually having the approval of Parliament.

So over a number of years—and I'm going to fast-forward this to where we are now—various Parliaments, because of different incidents that happened in England, more and more took control from the King and made it so that the Legislature actually does the approval—or, in their case, the House of Commons in Westminster; when it comes to Ontario and Canada, obviously, our House of Commons and the Legislature of Ontario.

You look like you're about to fall out of your seat, Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate very much what the member from Timmins-James Bay is saying and the explanation, and I think all members need to understand what we're doing right now, but at the same time I would ask him to talk about the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport estimates, which is what we're debating at the moment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am not challenging the Chair, but I am softly suggesting that the process of concurrence within our standing orders, as spelled out, is what I'm debating. We're debating this debate as a result of the standing order that deals with concurrence, and I'm speaking to the process of concurrence and I'm leading to what will actually be the estimates of today. If you're telling me that the standing orders are no longer in order, I'm waiting for you to say that, because I don't believe that they are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): And you're not challenging the Chair. I appreciate that very much and I look forward to your remarks on tourism, culture and sport.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, concurrence is the debate and I'm speaking to the issue of concurrence.

I'd ask the Speaker to give me some latitude here in order to go through that, because I think it's important that members understand the responsibility that's put on them by previous Parliaments when it comes to the budgetary process. That's the point that I'm trying to make here.

As I was saying, to abridge the discussion, over a succession, a number of years, what's happened is that the federal House, or Westminster in England—that's where most of this comes from—decided more and more over the years to withdraw the power of the crown and to put it into the House of Commons. The reason for that was pretty simple: People wanted to have a say about what was going on, not only with how much tax they were being taxed by the crown, but also what the money was going to be spent on. Over the years, our Parliament has become a much more responsible Parliament in the sense that the Parliament and the Legislatures of the land decide the measures of taxation, how much revenue is needed, and where those dollars are going to be spent—for example, within the Ministry of Tourism or any of these other ministries that are listed under this particular concurrence motion.

Members have to take seriously what their responsibility is, and that is that the government has the right and the obligation to put forward a budget. They did so last year, and this House, by way of its majority, rejected that budget. As a result, we ended up in an election. But the process is that the government introduces a budget because they determine how much money they need to be able to operate the government and the various services, such as the Ministry of Transportation, and they need to be able to make sure that the process allows for members of this assembly on the opposition side—and government—to be able to question those particular estimates, such as the Ministry of Tourism, because that's really what the accountability is: that government can't just have the right to spend money, do what it wants, and have nobody know about it or nobody have a say. There has to be a process.

1350

The process by which we appropriate dollars in Ontario is based on the Westminster model, which is that the government proposes a budget; once they've proposed a budget and the budget eventually passes, as it did this summer, then the estimates are tabled. The estimates at the time—for example, the Ministry of Tourism was one of the estimates that were tabled—then go before our estimates committee, and then members of the estimates committee decide in a rotation of parties which ministry is going to get reviewed: Is it the Ministry of Transportation? Is it the Ministry of Tourism? Is it the Ministry of Finance? Which one is it?

Then there's an in-depth look at each of those estimates at the estimates committee, which I think is a more recent phenomenon that we have here in Ontario. That probably came around 30 years ago, where we have an actual estimates committee. Before that, the estimates were conducted by various committees based on the responsibilities of each committee. Some committees, for

example, would have natural resources; another committee may have the Ministry of Tourism, so those estimates were done separately, but we opted some 30 years ago to have an estimates committee that looks strictly at estimates.

But the point is this: By the third Thursday in November, the estimates that are not finished are deemed to have been concurred with. They're deemed to have been done and reported to the House. We find ourselves now at that point. As of the third Thursday of November, the estimates were reported to this Legislature, and once the estimates are before us—such as the Ministry of Tourism—you then have to go through a process of accepting those expenditures. The government proposed a budget. The government passed a budget with its majority. The government then sent those estimates, such as the Ministry of Tourism's, to the estimates committee to be reviewed. The committee did its job in reviewing estimates such as the Ministry of Tourism's, and then it reported back to the House, because now you need to get concurrence on those estimates that have been reported back to the House.

So we find ourselves at this point in a two-hour debate on the various ministries that are named inside this particular concurrence motion. We find ourselves now being able to deal with those particular ministries one at a time—in this case, the Ministry of Tourism. For example, in the Ministry of Tourism estimates, I've often felt that there is a real gem in the province of Ontario on James Bay having to do with tourism, as it approaches not just Moosonee, but it approaches Moose Factory and other communities.

For example, one of the things that the government could have done in these particular estimates is to appropriate X amount of dollars per year for the next number of years so that the communities of James Bay can organize themselves in such a way as to be able to develop infrastructure, so that when tourists come to James Bay, they actually have some good infrastructure to be met with.

Unfortunately, infrastructure in places like Moosonee and most of our coastal communities and most of our reserves leaves a little bit to be desired. Water and sewer systems are old, fragile and breaking. Our streets are in pretty rough shape. A municipal council or a reserve is not going to pay to pave a street when they know they've got to rip the pipe up, and that's a situation that most of these communities find themselves in. Very basic dollars towards being able to fix the infrastructure in those communities would have been appropriate to be able to develop a tourism strategy—

Hon. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order from the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd be delighted to be on number 9, which is infrastructure, but we are on order number 8, which is tourism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard the member from Timmins-James Bay talking about the

tourism interests in his riding leading to infrastructure discussion, but I would again ask the member for Timmins-James Bay to confine his remarks to the debate we're currently undertaking on concurrence in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, the government could have, in the Ministry of Tourism budget, taken a look at providing the dollars necessary to be able to develop infrastructure on James Bay, both hard and soft, so that we're able to present to people who travel up on the James Bay a better destination package—so that, when they get there, there is not only something to see, but there's some infrastructure there to be able to view it on. It's unfortunate that the government decided not to do that in these estimates, but we're always hopeful for tomorrow, and who knows what's going to happen next?

The next part of this—obviously at the end of this vote, when it's done—is that there will have to be a supply bill that comes back to the Legislature to be voted on. With that, I look forward to the next estimate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate? The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To my crowd and my fans: May I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As I was saying in the case of the James Bay, there is very, very weak infrastructure, and if the government had decided to partner with, first of all, the only municipality on the James Bay, which is Moosonee, and then made some sort of deal with the federal government to deal with issues on reserve, to deal with the local services board, MoCreebec, we could have been in a position where we'd actually develop some much-needed infrastructure to be able to develop tourism on the James Bay.

I think there is a huge opportunity for economic development for the people living on the James Bay and a way to be able to help that local economy. But it's going to take some vision on the part of government to say that we're looking at this over multiple years, because we're talking about a fairly large investment by the time you fix roads, fix water and sewer, put some pavement on the roads, do some building of basic infrastructure to support tourism, some work on the train as it

comes into Moosonee. It's going to take a fair amount of money.

It's like anything else, Speaker: Build it, and they will come. But you've got to build it, and where we are right now, it's not built. We have a community called Moosonee, we have McCreebec, we have Moose Factory and we have the communities north of that, but there isn't any integrated plan by which to develop tourism in that particular area.

On the issue of infrastructure, I think the larger issue—and our leader Andrea Horwath has spoken to this a number of times—is that what municipalities really need is stability in knowing how much money they're going to get over multiple years. One of the difficulties we currently have with infrastructure spending is that the government, because they love to have press conferences and say, “Hey, great. Look what we did. We gave you all this money,” doesn't provide stable infrastructure dollars to communities over multiple years.

Now, imagine if you're sitting around a municipal council table somewhere in northern Ontario, south-western Ontario, Toronto—or anywhere else, for that fact—and you're trying to figure out what your priorities are when it comes to being able to invest in infrastructure. You're really kind of at the whim of what the provincial and federal governments are going to do on infrastructure. If you know that water is the big thing, then you put forward water projects. If it's arenas, then you put forward arena projects. All of those things are issues that municipalities need to deal with, and they're all equally important—making sure the arena roof doesn't leak. Unfortunately, we just saw a case where there was an arena—I'm not exactly sure where—and the snow load collapsed the roof.

We need to make sure that our infrastructure is safe, and the best people to make those kinds of decisions, I think, are at the local level. We've argued for a long time that we should be saying to municipalities across this province, our partners, “Here's how much money you're going to get each and every year for the next five years,” so that councils can go back to their council meetings, sit down, decide what their priorities are and say, “We know we're at least going to get this kind of money. We can plan year one, year two, year three, year five what we're going to do when it comes to planning for infrastructure in our communities.”

I think that's something that has been lost on the government. Yes, we have our gas tax, which is helpful—there's no question. Only those communities that have infrastructure, when it comes to transit, are the ones that get the lion's share of it, but it's something. So you know you're going to get some money. But for most communities, it really is a problem because you don't have a good enough barometer on knowing how much money you're going to have. You may have something right now that has to be done—let's say a water or sewer project that needs to be done because of breakage and whatever may have happened. Then, at the same time, you've got to start planning for the arena; you've got to plan for the

pool; you've got to plan for municipal streets. You've got all kinds of plans that you have to plan for when it comes to infrastructure spending. So I would much prefer the government to have decided, yes, we're going to do infrastructure spending in one way that allows municipalities to be able to plan.

1400

With that, Speaker, I wanted to put that on the record. I have and I feel so much better because of it. Thank you for sharing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up in the House today to discuss the concurrence-in-supply motions. I think it's an unusual way to talk about the important issues that are facing the Treasury Board of this province. I'm not quite sure what the thinking was when the Conservatives refused unanimous consent, but here we are.

So we're going to be talking about infrastructure, and I must tell you, as a fairly new finance critic, that following the money in this place is a very interesting process, I find. The fall economic statement had some broad gestures. The finance committee has travelled around the province. We heard from Ontarians from the north, the south, the east, the west. They have a lot of ongoing issues which are systemic in nature and very much tied to the way that funding flows from this place and the priorities of this Legislature, and, in particular, of this government. Then we have the estimates, where we sort of peel back the layers, of course. That was an interesting process as well. I do like that.

From my perspective, the most accurate financial data that comes out of the Ontario Legislature is the public accounts, because that's the money that has already been spent. Those are real dollars. As many of you know, we have a \$12.5-billion operational deficit, which makes this concurrence-in-supply motion all the more important.

On the issue of infrastructure, I've been carrying around the 2014 Auditor General's report—it's my new little mini bible—because it does raise some very serious financial issues, particularly on infrastructure. She highlighted that there are inconsistencies in the way that infrastructure is funded in this province. It's unfortunate the supply motion is crafted this way, because infrastructure pins so many things together. It ties the economy. It ties the productivity of this province. There are environmental considerations to the way infrastructure funding flows. And yet here we have this Auditor General's report, which has indicated those inconsistencies that I referenced around funding to the tune of \$8.2 billion in additional funding that flowed from the provincial treasury over the last 74 public infrastructure projects.

She found—this is on page 197—that “where Infrastructure Ontario concluded that private-sector project delivery” under the AFP and procurement “would be more cost effective, we noted that the tangible costs (such as construction, financing, legal services, engineering services and project management services) were

estimated to be nearly \$8 billion higher than they were estimated to be if the projects were contracted out and managed by the public sector.”

What was really interesting is that before Christmas, of course, we challenged the government on this report, as we should. It's our job to do so. The Minister of Economic Development came back and said, “We're the best in the world for infrastructure funding.” I don't think spending \$8.2 billion that the province doesn't have is anything to brag about, I must tell you.

But on the financing costs, these are not questioned. Financing costs under public infrastructure over the last 74 infrastructure projects are indicated on page 203 of the Auditor General's report. Financing costs under a public sector comparator were \$500 million. Financing costs under the AFP and the procurement process were \$7 billion. That's a difference of \$6.5 billion. These are real numbers. So when we get a chance to go to estimates, we're going to be able to challenge the Minister of Finance in a very real way around these numbers.

The ancillary costs are not that different; there's a difference of \$400 million. But the big difference is the retained risks. This is where she found that there was no empirical evidence. So in a public sector comparator, Infrastructure Ontario made the case that those 74 infrastructure projects would have a retained cost of \$18.6 billion, and then AFP would be only \$4 billion. This is the number in question, Mr. Speaker, because this is the number which she basically says there's no empirical evidence for. In fact, this is essentially a made-up number.

As we discuss the supply motions in this House, as we discuss where money is going and where money is not going, this is a huge red flag for us on this side of the House, for New Democrats, a long-standing issue for us; and it should be of great concern to the government, because if there was ever a government that was looking to save money and to direct money where it was going to make a difference, through the infrastructure ministry, then you would be taking a second look at it. Instead, that's not what we found at all. That's not what we heard from the Minister of Economic Development. He thinks they're the best in the world—and therefore it must be true.

I do want to say—because I think it's very clear that there are serious issues around trust and the way the funding does flow—that the Auditor General also raised a very serious issue—very serious, Mr. Speaker: the conflict-of-interest declarations around how these contracts are established. She found that, “According to the agency's policies, each participant involved in evaluating submissions received in response to the request for qualifications/proposals that the agency issues for AFP projects is required to sign a conflict-of-interest declaration and disclose any relationships with any entities identified in the submissions. Evaluation teams typically include staff from Infrastructure Ontario; project sponsors; and various legal, financial, technical and cost consultants.” Of course, that's why it costs so much.

“However, in a sample of projects that we reviewed, Infrastructure Ontario was unable to provide us with signed conflict-of-interest declarations for a number of the participants involved in evaluating submissions, both at the request-for-qualifications and request-for-proposal stages.”

So, Mr. Speaker, on the Ministry of Infrastructure funding, how funding is flowing out to the province—because this government has said they're going to spend \$130 billion over the next 10 years. But if you carve off almost 25% of that, you are not going to see the jobs; you are not going to see the needed infrastructure; you are not going to close the gap on transportation, on transit ways, on water systems, on sewers, on storm water. It just isn't going to happen. If the government cares about infrastructure in the province of Ontario, they will rethink public-private partnerships in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mrs. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Infrastructure. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being demanded. It will be stacked at the end of the rest of the afternoon's debate.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have a chance to speak a bit to the estimate process for the Ministry of Transportation. As has been noted—you know, in this place, we don't get—especially as an opposition member—a lot of opportunity to really look at how the money is spent, especially when compared to other jurisdictions like a municipality, for example, which tend to go through the budgets line by line; or the American system, where they spend a lot of time looking at items line by line. But here, we really don't spend that much time.

1410

Anyway, I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about the Ministry of Transportation. Certainly, one of the biggest issues for me, in the riding of Parry Sound Muskoka, in the last couple of winters has been winter road maintenance. In fact, I have now presented some petitions with 2,950 signatures with regard to winter road maintenance. Just to give a little history on that, I've been elected for 13 years now, and in the first 10 years I hardly had a complaint about winter road maintenance. At that time, there was a system in place called managed outsourcing. I think “managed” is the key, where the Minister of Transportation took an active role in sending controllers out to look at winter road conditions and actually managing the private sector contractor who had the contract, directing them on when to put sand and salt

down and, importantly, paying for the cost of that sand and salt so it didn't come out of the contract price.

We've now switched, in the last couple of years—and it would be interesting to know whether it's saving money for the government or not, especially if you take into account all of the accidents that have been occurring and the big increase in accidents and, I would think, potential liability as well. They have a system called an area maintenance contract. The key difference is that the private sector contractor is now responsible for everything, so they send their own people out to patrol the roads and decide themselves on when and how much to sand and salt etc. I can say that, whereas in the first 10 years I was elected, I might get one or two complaints in a year about road maintenance, in the last couple of years it has been a daily thing. Obviously, it's important to the people in my area and, I'm sure, across the province or I wouldn't have had so many people sign the petition that I've been putting forward. In fact, I went to Huntsville a couple of weeks ago for two hours just to provide the opportunity for people to sign the petition, and 320 people came in in two hours.

I think we need to look at what was working, and the managed outsourcing system did work. The last couple of years, it has been a little scary out there at times; just very inconsistent conditions. Even if you get dry pavement on one section of highway, you just never know when you're going to run into glare ice. I've certainly experienced that myself. I've had cars on secondary highways spin out of control in front of me. I've seen Highway 11 closed this year a few times because the transport trucks were stuck on it because there wasn't any sand on the road south of Gravenhurst.

When I did the petition-signing in Huntsville, virtually every person that came in, of those 320 people in two hours, had some personal story. I talked to somebody in the resort business who manages resorts and has to work in Toronto and was considering moving out of Huntsville because of the risk of having to do that trip every week.

It's a big issue, and I'm trying to make a positive suggestion to go to a system that did work and that has a proven track record.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You mean unprivatize?

Mr. Norm Miller: In terms of the estimates, it would be good to know whether any money is being saved.

The member from the NDP is saying "unprivatize." No, that's not what I'm suggesting, but I am suggesting that MTO take more responsibility and go back to the system where they actually assume responsibility. Instead, they've hired all kinds more people to patrol the highways. Rather than just driving around and seeing whether the standards have been met, I'd rather see the people actually assume responsibility and direct the private contractor when to put sand and salt on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: On the issue of transportation and the way funding is flowing on this file, we have some serious concerns, obviously. As we went around

the province, we heard very strong recommendations from the people who are living the real experience, the truth, if you will, of a lack of transportation options. For that reason, if we were to look at the way that funding around maintenance actually happens in this province, we would recommend that in the fiscal year 2015-16, the budget propose a plan to phase out area maintenance contracts for highway maintenance and restore the responsibility for delivering the service to the OPS. I think there are savings to be had, and that's why we'll be fighting for that. We heard from our northern municipalities. This is a real, real issue.

If we're talking about unlocking the potential of the north through a shared prosperity and economy, they need transit options. For that reason, I think that we would be looking for the government, obviously, to reinstate the Northlander and to put \$20 million a year for four years into passenger rail service in northeastern Ontario.

I couldn't believe, in the last session, when someone said, "Well, why can't they just drive?" They can't drive because we don't have the proper maintenance.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who said that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I won't say who. That would be rude.

Finally, though, I think that the Ministry of Finance, in the fiscal year 2015-16 budget, should identify permanent revenue sources adequate for sustaining at least \$2.9 billion per year of investment in Ontario's transit and transportation infrastructure—the government shouldn't have any problems with that—but that those revenues should flow directly into the Trillium Trust, to be dedicated for such purposes, and not into general revenues, and that the collection of these revenues not have the effect of increasing income inequality.

I thought about bringing up the whole issue, because the LRT was mentioned earlier. Of course, the government had proposed originally to invest almost two thirds of the funding for that infrastructure project, that transit project. That did not happen. Then I was thinking that the bullet train that the Minister of Transportation once said would happen along the Windsor-Toronto corridor, of course, didn't happen as well.

We're being realistic. I think that, as far as the money flowing on the transportation file, these are realistic and tangible issues that will strengthen the economy and the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, and we're darned right to vote against that budget. It's the biggest step backwards that we've seen in a long time. This is a case where the Liberals try to say that they're progressive, and they try to say they're doing the right thing. But they're out-conservating the Conservatives.

Listen, I remember. I was in this House, along with others, when the Conservative government of the day first started the privatization of winter road maintenance. Je me souviens.

When it was originally done, the only thing the government had done is—we used to have a hybrid system. The Ministry of Transportation was responsible for the planning and the dispatching of winter road maintenance plows, salt trucks etc. We had a mixed system, where 50% of the plows were private and 50% were ministry. The idea was that if you needed more plows because it had snowed, you'd call in the contractors, and you didn't pay them when you didn't need them. The Conservatives decided: "Let's only have private plows," so they got rid of the MTO plows, and the Conservatives went to where it was all private plows.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka is perfectly right: That particular model allowed the ministry to manage when the salt truck was going to be on the road, what the circuit times were going to be etc.

I remember that the members of the Liberal opposition, in the days of Mike Harris, got up in this House and they howled. They howled. They sounded more left-wing than the NDP. They kept on saying, "Boy, when we get to government, we're going to fix this, because it's terrible that Mike Harris has privatized winter road maintenance."

They get to power, the Liberals, and they out-conservative the Conservatives, because now what they've done is they've privatized the entire system. They didn't just privatize the rest of the plows. They privatized the people who go out and do the dispatching. They privatized the people who do the patrolling. They privatized the engineering. Everything has been privatized. So the Liberals went further than the Conservatives themselves were able to go.

If I was a Conservative, I'd be upset—very upset—that I'd been outflanked on the right by the Liberal Party. I'm telling you, you guys are progressive. These guys are just Conservatives.

I voted against that budget, with bells on, because the Liberals have this uncanny ability to say one thing and do the complete opposite to what they say.

Again, I just say that under the winter road maintenance contract scenario, what's even more interesting is that Kathleen Wynne is the one who signed the last part of the privatization, when she was Minister of Transportation. Remember the progressive Premier who believes in public services and wants to do what's right?

I think I'm doing this well, right?

Miss Monique Taylor: Talks a good game.

1420

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Talks a good game, but what she did was that she privatized the rest of it.

The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, as anybody else who lives in Ontario, will see that our roads are now in worse condition. Highways are being shut where they never were shut before, and we're spending more money than we did under the old system, either the original system that was there at the beginning or the hybrid system the Conservatives put in place. So they're ideologically completely to the right and making us spend more money and pay for less services. And here's what they want us

to do, and I'm not going to take the bait as a New Democrat. They want us to blame the contractors.

You know what? It's not the contractors who are at fault. Who is it that negotiated with the contractors? Who is it that put into the contracts the system that we have now? Contractors would like to do the right thing, but they can't because the contracts that were negotiated increased the circuit times, which means to say that there's less time spent to plow a kilometre of highway, and the way that the contracts are written, they're somewhat penalized if they use more salt or sand. I blame the Liberals—I was going to say "Conservatives." That would not be right—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: To-may-toes, to-mah-toes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To-may-toes, to-mah-toes—that's a good point.

The Liberal conservative party of Ontario—I blame them for having done this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote has been requested. It will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak today. I just want to allude back to my colleague from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington right at the start of this. This is a fundamental responsibility of the government; it's a fundamental responsibility of ministers to be aware of and to explain how the money—the taxes that are paid by all the great Ontarians we serve—is spent and what value we receive for that money. It's something as simple as filing a report and accountability. This government brought in Bill 8, the MPP accountability act, yet many of their ministers are delinquent in filing their reports.

I'm going to talk very specifically to a number of issues, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to start off by saying that this government has had 11 years to put Ontario on a path to financial security, yet they have dug us deeper into debt. Ontario's deficit is \$12 billion and counting. It's larger than the deficit of any other province, and bigger than all of the provinces' and the federal government's deficits combined.

Let's talk about debt: \$228 billion and counting, or 41% of our gross domestic product, or \$20,166 in debt per person. Every child born in Ontario will be saddled with this amount, the equivalent of paying for three years

of college. It's bigger than what this government spends on social services in Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the Speaker is well aware, the debate here is on the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's actually the Ministry of Community and Social Services, but I think the point you are making is a valid one: The member needs to talk about the Ministry of Community and Social Services spending and estimates.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, that segues perfectly, although I'm sure children's services has lots of accountability issues they'd like to talk about as well, and I'm sure one of my colleagues at some point will ask that minister for some answers. When I was the critic not long ago, I didn't get many answers on that file.

I'm going to go right to the disaster of SAMS. This government—and I did sit through the estimates committee—came out and brought a brand new program and said, after delaying it a number of times, "We are confident that this is going to be fine. We're going to roll this out, and there's not going to be anything. It's going to be a seamless transition." Mr. Speaker, I'll bring to your attention that they have already had to dump an additional \$16 million into this program. That wasn't in the estimates discussion we had. There was nothing in estimates that brought up this \$16 million, and that is to bail out municipalities who they have put in jeopardy due to stress on their staff, overtime and all of the problems with the minor glitches that the minister and the Premier both continue to allude are all that is wrong with the SAMS disaster.

We don't know whether that \$16 million was one-time or what that number may balloon to. We also heard an estimate once upon a time that a gas plant was going to cost us \$40 million as taxpayers, and that was \$1.2 billion, so we can talk about estimates.

They've also just recently hired—they're now trying to use the terminology "third-party adviser," which we all know is just a high-paid consultant. We don't know what the estimate of that amount is, and we don't know what the estimate of that is going to be down the road, but what we do know is that there are going to be huge amounts of costs to the taxpayers of Ontario.

These are the constant things. When I went to estimates—that was my first opportunity to be in estimates—we asked very clearly about a number of different questions. When I was back, I was doing some more stuff on the Family Responsibility Office, with my colleague Mr. Michael Harris from Kitchener—Conestoga. This question was on November 4, 2014, and he's still awaiting a reply: "Could you provide the committee with an updated chart of staffing at the FRO comparable to the breakdown of the 2010 annual report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario?" That's still outstanding, Mr. Speaker.

Again, my good colleague Mr. Michael Harris from Kitchener—Conestoga: "Can you provide the committee with updated data on total phone calls, answered calls, failed calls and the percentage of total calls comparable to the chart in the 2010 annual report?"

Myself, from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound: "Can you provide the committee with the number of vehicles impounded and licences removed in the last two years?" We're still waiting on those answers, Mr. Speaker. It's about accountability and estimates.

Again, my colleague Michael Harris from Kitchener—Conestoga: "Can you provide this committee with a breakdown of the \$2.1 billion in arrears reported in the Auditor General's 2012 annual report?"

And again, still with FRO, I asked the question: "What are the average arrears and average cost per FRO case? What are the plans to reduce the FRO caseload? What are the costs, and the return on these costs, for the Good Parents Pay website?"

These are things that my colleagues across the province are hearing, and we're asking for simple answers to ensure that we know where that is coming from. We want to know where every dollar given by the taxpayer is spent, and whether it's providing true value to the taxpayer. I don't think that's too much to ask; in fact, I think that's a pretty fundamental responsibility of all of cabinet and this government: to answer to the great people of Ontario.

In developmental services, I asked, "How many people are being served by the \$810-million funding announced for developmental services? How long are the wait-lists (by riding)?" Mr. Speaker, sadly, I'm still waiting for that. Again, there are people who are in need out there.

You come to estimates expecting the government to have a game plan. You expect them to have an estimate and a game plan, and you would hope that they have targets for each dollar they're spending, because Lord knows they are very good spenders, but what we want to see is the outcome on the other end. What's the value to the taxpayer?

On transfer payment agencies, my colleague Mr. Randy Hillier from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington asked a question, and this was on November 5, 2014: "Can you tell me how many transfer payment agencies are receiving less than \$120,000? How many employees are tasked with monitoring and evaluating the efficacy of transfer payment agencies and the funds spent? Could we get a couple of examples of audited financial statements and the tools for following up? Can we have information on the numbers of people who received services from transfer payment agencies last year?"

I think those are all valid questions. I think the taxpayers of Ontario want to know that type of information. It's a valid question. I'm not certain why a minister, to this day, has not answered those questions that I've cited here. There are a number of others, but I'll leave some of those for some of my colleagues to question as well.

I'm going to come back again for a little bit to SAMS. This was one of those ones that we were assured, espe-

cially after the eHealth boondoggle and that rollout of a program that we know has not provided any value to the taxpayer of Ontario—again, a billion-dollar boondoggle.

We take our job and our responsibility as opposition to ask those questions in a very diligent manner, a very practical manner, to ensure that we are in fact holding the government to account. They have an accountability requirement. They have a responsibility to the taxpayer, and we are doing that to ensure that the taxpayer has confidence in what this government is doing, or what any government is doing. They have to have a sense that their money that is being taxed is coming forward to pay for the products, services and programs that the people of Ontario so richly deserve.

SAMS has been nothing but a boondoggle. We're cutting millions of dollars on front-line care, but we're finding \$16 million at the drop of a hat to fix an administrative glitch that they knew about. I'm not certain they even know how to fix that glitch, which is sad in its own case. That's \$16 million that could have gone to the front line of health care, to those people in need, to those less fortunate in our society who are struggling with the high cost of energy—the highest in North America, I might add—under this government. They're struggling with affordable housing; there are shortages all over the province in that area. They're struggling with being able to pay their basic bills.

1430

The \$16 million—that's just a start. We have no estimate of what that number might balloon to, and it scares me to think, after watching the gas plant boondoggle in this House, where we may go with that one. It scares me to no end that we're talking again about—there was no estimate for this third-party consultant, third-party adviser, whatever they want to call it. You can call it whatever name you wish. It's like suggesting that a revenue tool is not a tax.

The people of Ontario get to it very quickly. They understand, and what they're wanting is for people to be able to have a plan in place, know that it's going to work and see what the valuable outcome to the people, at the end of the day, is.

The human and social cost to the spending by this government—decreasing ODSP income supports for families, thus forcing people into a life of poverty through no fault of their own. They've cut the community start-up benefit. Again, not any of that was discussed, I believe, in estimates committee.

In my backyard, we have a program called the Restorative Care Unit at the Chesley hospital. It costs \$810,000 a year to run that program, and they've cut that. Yet they can find \$16 million to fix their glitch, their error, on the SAMS program. There was no estimate of that. There was no estimate that I was aware of when I went to those committees that there were going to be those kinds of cuts coming. I struggle sometimes with how they can't find money for home care for our frail seniors and yet they can find this to fix and to cover up what I would suggest is a significant boondoggle that's impacting the

most unfortunate people, less fortunate people, in our communities.

You couldn't find money for developmental services, which resulted in 21,000 people now languishing on a wait-list. That's deplorable that they didn't have that, again, in their estimates and how they were going to address that. They need to ensure that they have estimates that are going to be practical and realistic and they're going to be able to find a way to do that.

They've cut programs like the beloved ranger program, the oldest youth work program in Ontario.

This is billions of dollars that have been wasted, money that could have paid for critical care to help save the lives of Ontarians, lifted them out of poverty and provided the myriad of critical services they need and deserve.

Just this weekend I noted that there was about \$3.5 million given to stop the closures of some hospitals in the riding of Mr. Rinaldi, Quinte–West. I would like to know if that was in the estimates.

At the end of the day, we're going to continue to hold them accountable, and that's part of this process today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to add a few comments on the supply motion for community and social services. It's unfortunate that we have so little time, because literally you could spend an entire hour on how funding is not being spent in the appropriate places on this issue.

My colleague has already referenced SAMS. I was going to talk a little bit about it. I will reinforce one issue that he raised, though: We really do think that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs should recommend to the Minister of Finance that the government, in its fiscal year 2015-16 budget, offer compensation to municipalities equal to any unbudgeted additional cost resulting from the implementation of the Social Assistance Management System. Right now it's estimated at \$16 million, but you know that you have to challenge those numbers. The incompetency of this software program, which the front-line OPS and OPSEU members warned the government would happen because this was a flawed program purchased by the ministry—it was known to fail in the United States, in two major States. We should learn from those other jurisdictions; we should. It's just common sense.

But I'm going to just spend a few minutes talking about what the Auditor General said on community and social services, and I'm going to summarize what her findings were, because the auditor, of course, tracks the money. On this file, in particular, the flaws in the funding directly impact the quality and the integrity of the people of this province.

The auditor found that “people with the highest-priority needs are not usually placed first.... Funding is not needs-based and cost variances are unexplained.... There is no consistent prioritization process across regions.... Roles and responsibilities over children's resi-

dential services need clarity.” There are vulnerable children in the system whose needs are not being met.

“There is no consistent process to access children’s residential services.” Now, these are desperate parents looking for much-needed crisis intervention. The auditor found that there was no consistent process.

“Program lacks performance indicators.” This is a quality control issue. If there was ever a ministry to have a strong quality benchmark on, this would be the ministry.

“Crisis placements are often not short-term as intended.” Now, please remember, this is the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature. These were her findings, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, she said, “Wait-lists for residential services are long.” All of us in this House know this to be true.

“Deficiencies in managing vacancies.” So when people burn out because this ministry is seriously underfunded and strategic funding is not getting to where it needs to go most—people burn out and they leave the system.

“Adult residences may go uninspected for years.” The most vulnerable, who need 24-hour care, and “Adult residences may go uninspected for years.”

“Care standards are few and open to interpretation”—open to interpretation. The actual maintaining of hygiene, nutrition, mental health, physical health—these are open to interpretation: unbelievable in the province of Ontario.

There are “numerous problems with data integrity,” and we all know that you need the proper data. You need the information to properly serve people in the system. This is incredible.

Now, finding that \$810 million—we could start a movie. It’s like Finding Nemo in this place, because I cannot find where that money is going. I intend to find it, because there are clearly areas where that money can be better spent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

As a recorded vote is being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon’s debate.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, government order number 12.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I recognize the Attorney General to move the motion.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have an opportunity, a few short minutes, to talk about the Ministry of Energy.

I note that there are a number of unanswered questions to do with the Ministry of Energy from the estimates meeting in November 2014, so I wanted to get those on the record, because it was unanswered questions from estimates that could have prevented the Ornge problems happening if they had been answered. There were actually questions asked about Dr. Mazza’s salary at estimates committee, and the government never answered them in a timely manner. Had that been exposed, I’m sure it would have been a huge red flag both for the government and certainly for the opposition.

Mr. Randy Hillier, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, has an unanswered question regarding details that were requested on the \$5.4-million investment in the Advanced Energy Centre at MaRS, downtown Toronto. Again, Mr. Hillier: Information was requested on anticipated future electrical energy exports from Ontario.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski, asked a question in which information was requested on the portion of the average hydro bill attributable to wind energy.

Mr. Yakabuski: A confirmation was requested as to whether over 700 megawatts of wind energy that is under construction and the approval process are subject to various appeal procedures. Mr. Yakabuski asked about the allocations under the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, LEAP. Additional information was requested about recent allocations take-up or surpluses by various local distribution companies, the LDCs, under the LEAP program. Information was also requested on how these funds are allocated to individual low-income residential customers.

Mr. Hillier asked about a Hydro-Québec comparative electricity price study. The Web link to this study by Hydro-Québec was requested. A verification of meter data by the IESO, Independent Electricity System Operator, was requested by Mr. Hillier. Additional information was requested on verification or auditing of electrical meter data assembled by IESO. Mr. Hillier also requested background on meter data management and repository: Information was requested on background information or comparative studies conducted by IESO related to the meter data management and repository model adopted in Ontario. I hope the government, this time around, answers those questions in a timely manner.

1440

I wanted to talk about energy because it’s a huge issue in Parry Sound–Muskoka, particularly affordability. I just have two minutes to do it, which is not enough time, but I want to get on the record that I’ve had all kinds of emails and calls, people coming to the office looking for help with their hydro bills. Grant Hallman sent me a long letter with his concerns. Ray Gough of Gravenhurst also wrote to me, and hundreds and hundreds of other people have either written or come in.

Because I don't have enough time to go through it all, I would just point people to the Auditor General's annual report that came out in December last year and suggest they read the smart meter section where it points out and explains the global adjustment, which is a relatively new creation to pay for the above-market costs, that the government has signed the contracts through the feed-in-tariff program. It's a little scary because it points out that the global adjustment cost, which is now 7% of people's hydro bills, has gone up 1,200%, from 0.4 cents a kilowatt hour to 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour. It's going to be a total of \$50 billion from 2006 to 2013—\$7.7 billion in 2013 alone. Huge, huge numbers, and people are paying for it on their hydro bills. The only people who actually see it have signed a fixed contract. I had a senior come in. They didn't have a huge bill, but of their \$150 bill, \$61 was global adjustment and \$40 was the actual energy cost. Affordability is a huge issue across Parry Sound-Muskoka.

With that, that's all the time I have and I'm going to sit down now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm glad the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka mentioned the smart meters. It's clearly outlined in the Auditor General's report, and I would like to remind people that this is an independent officer of the Legislature whose sole, non-partisan job is to follow the money, and, very quickly, Mr. Speaker, what she found—you know, it was unfortunate that the Minister of Energy said that this was too complicated for the auditor. After all, I would just like to put on the record that what he was saying is that having an MBA, a highly coveted accounting designation that is difficult to obtain and decades of experience in a competitive, male-dominated industry amounts to the same thing as being someone's daughter. I want to get that on record because it was a shameful day in this Legislature.

What the Auditor General said, though, about the Ministry of Energy and the way funding flows through that ministry is, "Cost of service reviews do not take into account all information and practices that could affect consumer rates," and, "Rate designs could disadvantage some customers." Actually, we know that's happening. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka just gave us a good example.

There is "Lack of clarity in rate designs." There are "Different weighting of fixed and usage-based charges." This is key, Mr. Speaker: "Settlement proposals are not reviewed from a public interest perspective." This is a gas plant issue. There was no reason to make that contract whole. That was not in the public interest, and I'm sure there are some members there who would agree with that. There was no need to do that.

There is "Additional review needed for accuracy and validity of information submitted to the board."

Finally, she makes a very interesting observation in that the board needs "more training," essentially is what

she says—greater oversight, more training. They need to fulfill their responsibility as a board.

When she actually goes through the audited accounts, though, she mentions, "Improvement needed in addressing consumer complaints." The seniors who come into my office, who are deciding whether or not to eat or heat their homes, would concur with that.

"Inspection efforts focused primarily on gas market-ers," "Insufficient audits of gas utilities." Finally, "Lack of assessment"—as I mentioned—"of the board's performance in meeting its mandated objectives."

This is, once again, an excellent report that this government should pay due attention to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Very quickly, Speaker, I just want to point out yet again that energy is another one of those files where the Liberals have out-conservative the Conservatives. They've become the Conservative Party of Ontario and you guys are now the progressives.

I remember Ernie Eves. He was the Premier of the day. He started the privatization of Ontario Hydro. Even Ernie had to back off. Ernie said, "You can't do all of this stuff because the rates are going to go through the roof, citizens are going to feel it in the pocket and, more importantly, businesses are going to get hurt." Even Ernie after a while said, "I can't go that far."

I remember the Liberals in opposition going apoplectic over Ernie Eves wanting to privatize hydro. They said that when they got to power, they'd be different. God, were they different. They turned out to be the real Conservative Party of Ontario.

Congratulations once again to the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested. It will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I move the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: What we're talking about here, of course, are documents from the estimates, and we've learned that we simply can't trust the numbers that come from this government, so I'm going to talk about my proof of that.

Let's go back to public accounts, which tells us just how reliable the government's predictions were. The public accounts of 2013 show that last year government spending actually increased in 15 out of 24 government ministries. In addition, revenue shortfalls were experi-

enced in many ministries. For example, infrastructure saw a revenue decrease of \$60 million, but increased spending of \$85 million.

The deficit actually grew last year and is projected to grow again this year, despite the Liberals using a contingency reserve fund of \$1 billion. We expect the government to do that again this year, even though they've already grabbed \$300 million from the reserves, as indicated in the fall economic statement.

This government talks about restraint, but Ontario's deficit is bigger than all other provinces combined, and they've added \$10 billion in new spending in the past two years. In fact, three other provinces actually turned to surplus this year. Even if you remove those three from the calculation, Ontario's deficit is still larger than all other provinces combined.

Speaker, let's look at what was actually in the public accounts. I refer to page 23 of the public accounts. It talks about balancing the budget and it talks about Ontario's record against deficit targets. Page 23 starts with a chart showing a deficit projection of \$24.7 billion in 2009-10. It still talks about these numbers and it says, "Because of the better-than-planned results ... Ontario's accumulated deficit is \$25 billion lower...." It also says that it's because of "careful financial management." But let's get to an actual Ministry of Finance document that we revealed. You can find that, of course, Speaker, in Focus on Finance.

In one briefing document prepared as "confidential advice to cabinet," senior financial officials repeatedly warned that the economy has not regained full strength. In fact, they refer to this \$24.7-billion deficit. They say that it's a benchmark of projects. It is complete fiction, Speaker.

Here's their quote: It "was never a real expectation" and was a "deliberate" policy to project a "worst-case" outcome. In other words, it was deliberately misleading. They admit that "The path to balance was then drawn from there, assuming a straight-line trajectory," and it was assumed that spending would be constrained to whatever it takes to hit the target. In other words, somebody started with a made-up number—in their own words, "It was never a real expectation"—drew a straight line to zero and said, "These are now our deficit numbers for the years remaining." It's fiction, Speaker, complete fiction in their own public accounts document.

1450

Let's talk about their next document, the fall economic statement. Despite warnings last year from the Bank of Canada that growth would fall short, this Liberal government ignored those warnings, and as a result, they ended up with a \$500-million revenue shortfall. Only four months after publishing the number, they had to correct it by \$500 million. That's how off these guys' estimates are.

Speaking of warnings, the Auditor General, in her 2014 report, warned the Liberals about the possibility of further credit rating downgrades because of their laissez-faire attitude towards our debt. A week after her report,

Fitch cut the government's rating. Moody's sent a shot across their bow just last week, voicing their doubt about the numbers. In fact, here's the Moody's quote: "Ontario's persistently large deficits, and its tendency to delay the most significant cost-cutting measures towards the latter years of its projected timeline for returning to a balanced budget, increase the risk that the province will be unable to achieve its goal" of balancing by 2017. Speaker, the experts don't believe their numbers and we don't either.

Here's what else the Auditor General had to say on page 5 of the annual report: "Our key commentary in chapter 2 is on Ontario's growing debt burden." She talks about how the government "should provide more information on how it plans to achieve its longer-term objective of reducing its net debt-to-GDP ratio." Remember, when these guys took office, the net debt-to-GDP was 27%. Today, it's forecasted to reach a high of 40.5%.

According to the auditor, "The net debt-to-GDP ratio is a key indicator of the government's financial ability to carry its debt relative to the size of the economy." It's going the wrong way. Our deficits are going the wrong way—\$9 billion, \$10 billion, \$12 billion. The debt-to-GDP is going the wrong way.

We also have once-secret documents from the Ministry of Finance that show the government had a \$4.5-billion gap prior to the 2013 budget that, again, they hid from the public. I will talk about that gap here in their own words. In late February 2013, the Ministry of Finance identified that the government is at least \$3.5 billion off the pace needed to balance the budget. These are in these once-confidential documents that we were able to get out through the gas plant scandal committee, actually. It states that the fiscal gap stems from "existing ministry results-based plans falling short of managing within allocations." In other words, they just spent \$3.5 billion more than they took in. In fact, the number was revised to \$3.6 billion.

When the cabinet was aware of this, they went on a retreat. They went on a retreat, and instead of taking decisive action to reduce this massive hole in their budgeting, cabinet discussions actually resulted in an increase to the shortfall. They ended up with a \$4.5-billion gap.

This is interesting because in a document dated May 2, the day the budget was presented, it shows that the multi-year expense plans remained largely unchanged. That means the government knew when it presented its budget—it said one thing, but knew they were \$4.5 billion worse off. They publicly insisted they were "on track to balance the budget," yet the very day before, they knew they were \$4.5 billion further away from ever balancing the budget. They say one thing, but do the complete opposite.

We haven't even touched the scandalous waste of this government yet, the \$1.1 billion on the gas plants scandal, the \$8 billion in wasted money on infrastructure procurement, the \$1 billion on eHealth, the \$1 billion on Ornge, the \$400 million on the MaRS scandal; and \$1

billion over budget on smart meters, which has led rate-payers to pay billions and billions of dollars to sell off surplus energy.

Speaker, considering the fact that we've got a minute and a half left to talk about the truth versus made-up numbers, I want to talk again, back to public accounts—their own book. Speaker, you keep hearing these guys across the aisle continue to say they got \$640 million less from the feds this year. But their own public accounts document of 2013-14, on page 70, shows us that the actual money received from the federal government was \$21.661 billion. In 2013-14, a year later, the actual was \$22.277 billion. You hear from them that they got \$640 million less, but the truth, the actual fact from their own Ministry of Finance—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: How can you say it's not true? It's right here on page 70. You got \$22.277 billion. That's more than \$21.661 billion.

I know they don't know anything about math, Speaker. We hear that week after week. They make up numbers. I tell you: They can make up all the numbers they want, but the facts are here. They told us one thing, and the truth is in print. They were off by a billion and a half. They actually got \$600 million more.

For all the evidence of negligence and incompetence I have just listed, we have absolutely no faith in any of the estimates numbers, that any of them at all will be accurate when next year's public accounts are released.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I really just want to raise the issue around where the funding went this year, where it didn't go and, actually, why we're in this position.

I do want to point out that from last year's budget, the so-called progressive budget that is very much an austerity budget, there are 6% reductions in every ministry—it's in your budget—except for health care, education, post-secondary, children, social services and the justice sector.

I remember when Mike Harris brought in 5% cuts in every ministry. I remember thousands of people out on that front lawn. Perhaps you'll remember it as well, because you may have been here. I think they lit an effigy of him on fire when they made 5% cuts. This government has 6% cuts in every ministry, and the way it was reported afterward was really interesting, I'm sure you'll agree. The media deemed it an austerity budget after the fact.

What's going to be interesting with the supply motions in these various ministries going forward, quite honestly, is that this is not sustainable. This government is making decisions around funding, and their priorities are completely out of whack. We've talked about a culture of wellness and well-being in the health care sector, around early intervention and prevention, which is a smart investment that they refuse to listen to. The alternative financing procurement process needs to be examined. You should pay attention to the Auditor General.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about concurrence in the estimates. I'm proud, for a number of reasons. Obviously, this is an important debate, but I'm also proud because I have the privilege of working as parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board. We have a chance to work through the finances of the province on a daily basis. So I'm proud to speak to this very important component of the debate here in this Legislature.

We just heard from a number of members opposite about the importance of focusing on facts. I don't want to spend a lot of time there, but I do want to mention a few quick items, if I may. The member opposite from the PC caucus talked about the federal government. The fact is that Ontario receives \$11 billion less than it pays to the federal government. That is a fact.

The other piece: He talked a lot about economic growth, and I just want to address one issue here. I was just provided with a document from the member for Ottawa-Orléans, prepared by the Royal Bank of the Canada, that I think is quite interesting. I won't go into the details, but ultimately, what it talks about is that they are projecting that Ontario will lead GDP growth among all provinces in Canada. That's the kind of economic planning and outlook that I think we need to be talking about, and those are the facts that we should be focused on.

1500

Mr. Speaker, a number of us here in this Legislature are relatively new. I just want to take a minute to give some quick background, for those of us in the Legislature, but also for the folks at home who are watching, particularly my constituents in Etobicoke Centre, on what it is that we're debating here, what the concurrence in estimates means.

Concurrence really represents the Legislature's approval for the estimates for a fiscal year. In this case, we're actually discussing the concurrence for the 2014 fiscal year. Concurrence is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. Estimates of ministries and offices not selected by the committee are deemed concurred by the Legislature. In this case, the committee selected 10 ministries and offices for review, and we've had debate on a number of those already.

On November 27, 2014, the Standing Committee on Estimates filed its report on its review of these estimates with the assembly, and so the assembly's concurrence on estimates, which we are debating today, represents the approval of these selected ministries' and offices' estimates.

The Supply Act, which many in this Legislature know about and some of my constituents would know about as well, would be introduced following orders in concurrence in estimates and, if passed, would represent the final statutory authority for spending by the government and this assembly.

Today's discussion and the ultimate vote are really important, because they're important steps in approving government spending for the past fiscal year, which actually ends later this month.

I just want to take a moment, as we're talking about the Ministry of Finance, to talk about and remind members where we are in the fiscal cycle. Estimates for the government ministries and offices, volume 1, were tabled in the Legislature on July 7, 2014, and volume 2, for legislative offices, was actually tabled earlier today.

The estimates set out a comprehensive account of the government's intended expenditures for the fiscal year and include details of the spending plans that were presented in our government's 2014 budget. As we near the end of this fiscal year, we'll soon be introducing the Supply Act, should concurrence in estimates be reached. So today's concurrence in estimates discussion is really important, as I said at the beginning, because it's required to move forward in finalizing the review of estimates that has taken place.

The Supply Act is required every fiscal year, to provide the final approval and legal authority for all spending for the year. It does not seek any new spending, but it does authorize expenditures as reflected in the estimates. The reason this debate is so important is because today's concurrence in estimates must be obtained before the Supply Act can be introduced.

This act, if passed, would constitute our final authorization by the Legislature of the government's spending program for this fiscal year and give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments, the commitments that the people of Ontario voted for when they elected this government. That includes spending on a range of important priorities, including health care, education, supporting our most vulnerable citizens, and growing the economy. That's why reaching concurrence in estimates, again, is so important.

I'd like to talk a little bit, as we're talking about the estimates for finance, about how the Ministry of Finance's work, particularly in fiscal planning and economic planning, has impacted Ontarians over the past year.

On July 14, the government passed the Ontario budget. The budget laid out a plan for Ontario, as you know, Mr. Speaker, with support for job creation and a more secure future for our province and our people. The government's plan did a range of things. One of the things that I think is so important, as we think about what that plan did, was what it did to support our economic growth and job creation.

I mentioned earlier how some economists are already predicting that Ontario will have some of the strongest growth in Canada, amongst the Canadian provinces, in the coming year. But I'd like to highlight some of the steps that our government has taken, as part of the Ministry of Finance, to do that.

One of the things that the Ministry of Finance has done is it created a 10-year economic plan in the last budget. That provides the tools for Ontario to seize opportunities to grow the economy and be competitive on

the global stage. Of course, we all know that there's fierce competition for global investments, but to help secure the investments, one of the things the Ministry of Finance has done is ensure that we have a competitive tax system. We have to make sure that our taxes are competitive so that we can attract investment to our province.

The other parts of this plan are that we reduced energy costs for business; we cut red tape, which is so important and something that I hear a lot about in my constituency; and we provided targeted investments to support businesses, particularly in key sectors where we know that there are job opportunities, where businesses will invest and create jobs for all Ontarians. This is, of course, a key component. Job creation is one of those key components that were part of the budget and part of the work of the Ministry of Finance and funded by those estimates.

The other thing I'd like to mention is part of that fiscal process and what was done not just in the past, but into the future. We talked about job creation in the past and going forward, and I've talked about economic growth going back and into the future, but I also want to talk about the fact that we're not only making a difference in the lives of citizens today, but we're also improving the futures of our children and grandchildren. We're doing that through a range of measures, and I'll just take a couple of minutes to refer to what I'm talking about.

First of all, to help accommodate population growth and the demands on infrastructure that come with it, the Ministry of Finance called for and planned for investments of \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years. I know that our Minister of Transportation, who is here with us today, is leading that process; I'm incredibly pleased with the work he's doing, and proud of the work he's doing on behalf of our government.

Of that investment that the Ministry of Finance laid out, \$29 billion is dedicated funding for public transit, highways and other priority infrastructure projects across our province. This will impact people in every riding across Ontario, and will of course, if I think about my riding of Etobicoke Centre, help to address congestion—particularly, in part, in the GTA and in the Hamilton area—through investments in roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

This is something that people in Etobicoke Centre speak to me about regularly. When I think about the priorities I hear from my constituents, this is one of the issues that they talk about a lot, this issue of making sure that we're continuing to invest for the future in building the infrastructure that we need to support our economy and quality of life. This is all part of the Ministry of Finance's fiscal plan.

To finance that, what the Ministry of Finance has done is, they moved forward on a plan to unlock the value from sale of our shares of General Motors and certain other real estate assets that we have. That's a key function of the Ministry of Finance, and something that's part of the work that the ministry has done to support that long-term plan to support Ontarians into the future.

The other thing I want to mention as part of the Ministry of Finance's work is the launch of the green bond program. This is also just an example. On its own, it's one measure, one piece of the puzzle, but what I do know is that there was strong demand for the first issue of those bonds, with orders approaching \$2.4 billion from investors in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia. What this does is, it signals the confidence of investors in Ontario, the fact that people are willing to buy these bonds and support the infrastructure plan that the Minister of Transportation and others are leading in our government.

I've talked about the importance of positioning Ontario for long-term success. Obviously as a government we have a responsibility to support people in every stage of our lives, and that is what this government has been doing for many years and will continue to do. I mention this because I think that, as we think about what the Ministry of Finance's role is, the focus tends to sometimes be very much on fiscal affairs; fiscal affairs are obviously a critical component of what the ministry does, but it's also about fiscal planning and planning for our future.

We talked about transportation. I've talked about job creation. Another piece is poverty reduction. Of course, we all know that the Poverty Reduction Strategy is an important component of the fiscal plan, something that the Ministry of Finance has collaborated with other ministries on to put together. Since launching the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008, about 47,000 children and their families were actually lifted out of poverty, and many others were prevented from falling into poverty in the past six years, something that I'm very proud of—and that I know many members on this side are very proud of.

This year alone, the Ministry of Finance allocated more than \$1 billion in the Ontario Child Benefit, and that budget included \$15 billion in funding for children's social services. I think these are all important investments, all important components of the fiscal plan, and all important elements of what the Ministry of Finance does through the estimates that we're talking about today.

The other thing that I'd like to mention is something that comes up a lot in my riding of Etobicoke Centre: the issue of housing. The ministry allocated \$16 million over three years to create about 1,000 new supportive housing spaces and related supports to help Ontarians living with mental health issues and addictions. I hear a lot about mental health issues in my community, and our government and the Ministry of Finance have responded through their fiscal planning framework.

The other thing the Ministry of Finance has done is provided health benefits for children and youth in low-income families to ensure that they have access to services not covered by publicly funded health care, like prescription drugs, vision care and mental health services—again, issues that I hear about regularly from my constituents. I wanted to highlight these as some of the outcomes that come from the fiscal planning process that the Ministry of Finance is responsible for.

When I think about commitments to the future and supporting Ontario in the future—our economy—one of the things the Ministry of Finance has done is that they have also committed significant funds to ensure that we're supporting some key priorities of this government that the people of Ontario elected us to support. A couple of those are, of course, education and health care. These are things that come up in my riding frequently. I know they come up in all our ridings frequently.

1510

In my community we have one of the largest, if not the largest, percentage of seniors of any riding in the province, and so investments in health care and particularly in community care are so important. Community care, of course, can provide better quality care for seniors, but what it also does is give a reprieve to families. That's one of the things that I heard about a lot in my community: how important it was that we continue those investments in community care. That's one of the things that the Ministry of Finance has done through its fiscal planning.

The other piece that I'd like to mention is the investments that have been made in education. We have our Minister of Education here with us today, and I know that she's doing excellent work in trying to make sure that we're allocating funds to strengthening education. I know that there's a range of aspects that the Ministry of Finance estimates have allowed the Ministry of Finance to plan for in education, things like critical thinking, problem-solving—these are all important things that the ministry has planned for.

Mr. Speaker, what I wanted to lastly touch on was an issue that comes a lot in my community: the issue of making sure that we're getting value for money and managing our fiscal health. I'm proud to be working with the President of the Treasury Board on that and I'm happy to say that we're working towards a goal of eliminating the deficit by 2017-18, in a way that's fiscally responsible but also fair to the people of Ontario and responsible. There's a number of components to that. Of course, I don't have time to talk about them all now, but I just want to highlight some of the things that Minister Matthews spoke to recently when she was talking about how we're doing that.

First of all, we need to make sure that everyone is paying their fair share of taxes. That's a critical function of the Ministry of Finance.

The second thing is to make sure we're maximizing the value for government assets—again, a key responsibility of the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with others.

Finally, we've launched Program Review, Renewal and Transformation, something I'm proud to be working on with Minister Matthews. That's fundamentally new approach to how we budget, to how we manage the taxpayers' dollars. Basically, we're looking at every program within government, every line item, and looking to make sure we get a maximum value for taxpayers' dollars. When I think about the issues that came up in the campaign for me, that come up day to day with my

constituents, this is one of the key issues they raised with me: "Please make sure you're working to make sure we're getting value for taxpayers' dollars." That's a key responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, and that's why these estimates are so important to me, because the estimates that we're talking about approving today support that kind of planning, support that kind of work for the betterment of the people of Ontario.

Just to conclude, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind members of the importance of concurrence in the estimates that we're discussing today. Receiving concurrence would allow the Supply Act to be introduced and provide final spending authority for the fiscal year that is coming to a close.

This is not about approving new spending; it's about providing authority for the government to finance its programs and honour its commitments. It's about approving spending on important priorities like schools, hospitals and income support. I urge all members to support concurrence in the estimates so that spending on important public services that the people of Ontario depend on can be approved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

I recognize the member for Sudbury for his maiden speech in the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to the government estimates, specifically government order number 13, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance.

However, before I get into this debate, I hope you'll indulge me, as is tradition in this place. This is my inaugural speech in this great chamber as the MPP for Sudbury. I'd like to take a little time to acknowledge the people of Sudbury who put their trust in me to come back here and be their voice for them once again, and a few people who helped me get here as well.

I think all of us are here, no matter which party we represent, and we all know that we couldn't do this without the support of our families. Well, it's the same for me. There is absolutely no way I could have done this without the support from my wife and two daughters, Trinity and Thea. My wife and two daughters were my rock throughout this whole campaign. As long as I knew they were good, I was good. While all of us politicians are very used to the back-and-forth of politics—we build a skin for it, as I say—many forget that our families also have to deal with this back-and-forth as well. While many of us might find that easy to deal with, it is extremely difficult for some of our families. That's why I want to take the time to thank my wife, Yolanda, and my two young daughters, Trinity and Thea, for their unwavering support.

Mr. Speaker, a funny story: During the run-up to the by-election and then during the by-election, my wife was extremely busy at work. She's on many community organizations. One of the things that's very popular in my household is Theatre Cambrian. My wife was in rehearsals for this play throughout. It's called No Body

Like Jimmy, and it's a play about the election of a state congresswoman in which my wife plays the lead role, the congresswoman. There's nothing like giving my wife first-hand experience to bring to this role, participating in a by-election. We had great opportunities and some fun stories to share. Hopefully, she'll be able to take this with her when the show premieres in April.

But my wife not only has a full-time job and gives back to the community; she also has to look after my two daughters quite a bit, driving them to swimming, dancing, you name it. Those are the things our partners do while we're here. As I mentioned Theatre Cambrian, something that is also very important to my family and my two daughters, I should mention that my two daughters just finished performing in *The Who's Tommy*. I know I'm a little biased, but my two daughters actually had some phenomenal performances in that, so I just wanted to acknowledge them for that great work.

There were so many people who were involved in that production. I should mention that all of them were volunteers and that these people volunteer their time to give back to their community. I think it's the same with election campaigns. Everyone in this House knows well that campaigns are also not possible without strong performances and strong teams of dedicated and loyal volunteers. I was lucky to have a very dedicated and loyal team. I'm filled with gratitude for every hour they put in, for every door they knocked on and for every call they made, because this by-election wasn't easy.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you've ever been involved in a by-election, but they're quite unique. I have to tell you, having a by-election in Sudbury is unique, but having a by-election in Sudbury in January and February is even more unique. There's nothing like getting outside and knocking on doors in minus 38 degrees Celsius. So to the core of my team and to all of the volunteers, I want to say thank you for everything you did in this campaign. I want to say thanks for being engaged in the political process and for believing in me and what we want to do for the people of Sudbury and for the people of this great province.

I also want to thank the other candidates. They all brought forward some great ideas, and without them we couldn't have had such a great by-election and such great debates. I also want to recognize the Progressive Conservative candidate, Paula Peroni, who ran a second time after beating cancer. I think we all need to give her a huge round of applause.

As well, I would be remiss if I didn't take the opportunity to thank my father for his unwavering support. I should mention that during this campaign, my father celebrated his 101st birthday. We were lucky enough to have the Premier drop by for some birthday cake and to wish him well on his 101st birthday.

Interjection: How old are you, Glenn?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: And yes, I'm looking around and I know most people are now doing the math in their heads, as my colleague was just doing over here. I'm 45 years old. That means my father was 56 when I was born.

His friends used to joke often that he was the only person they knew who was getting Old Age Security and the baby bonus at the same time.

People my age don't get to hear about the Depression or the Second World War from their grandfathers, let alone their fathers. I'm thankful to still have him around to give me some advice and to share his perspective. I get his perspective often. Even if it's something great that we can do or something that's not so great, I'm just honoured to be able to have my father around to share those stories with me.

Also, just six days from today would have been my mom's 88th birthday. We lost her just over five years ago, and there isn't a day that goes by where I don't think about her. But I still want to thank her for instilling in me the values of family, hard work and dedication to a cause. That is something she always shared with me and my three sisters, Vicky, Irene and Dee Dee, which we then share and pass down to our families as well.

It's the history of family that is quite important to each of us, as it makes us who we are, and it's because of the history of this great place, this Legislature, that I stand here today with humility. I'm very conscious of the history in these walls, Mr. Speaker, and I have a strong commitment to live up to the expectations of those people of Sudbury who have placed their trust in me and sent me here.

1520

As I stand here, I can see the tremendous opportunities that are present in my riding of Sudbury, northern Ontario and Ontario. If I look at my great riding of Sudbury, the opportunities are endless, from research and development, innovation, science, research, forestry, mining, and tourism, just to name a few. We also have the great institutions of Laurentian University, Collège Boréal and Cambrian College; the president and vice-president of Cambrian College are here with us today. Thanks for joining us. I also should mention that I am a graduate of Cambrian College and very proud of that as well.

Mr. Speaker, under the guidance of this Premier, this government is building on Ontario's strong economic fundamentals and outpacing the US, the UK, and the Great Lakes states in job creation. We've seen that as well in Sudbury. Sudbury's economy is again strong, and it's showing its strength as the unemployment rate dropped 3.2% from a recessionary high of 9.3% to 6.1%, below the national average.

As I went door to door, many of the people of Sudbury shared their positive responses with the way our economy is unfolding, and within these government estimates is just the start of that. Many have spoken to me about doing more. I know that our government will do that.

Many small business owners in my community like our plan for growth and for keeping our recovery on course to ensure we can create more opportunities for them and for all of Ontario. Our economy will continue to move forward with a steady, balanced approach, and that will create jobs not only in Sudbury but right across the province. And we will do this by investing in skills

and training. This will help the people of Ontario get good jobs and succeed at work. We are investing in them, from their first job to their next job. We're going to invest in transit and transportation. This will help reduce congestion and protect our environment. We're going to invest in infrastructure; we'll build more and renovate more schools, hospitals and roads. Specifically on financial investment in infrastructure, this government has already committed \$26.7 million to build Maley Drive in my city—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Great project.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is a great project—along with \$1 billion to complete the four-laning of Highway 69. Not only does this make our roads safer, it also creates hundreds of jobs and changes the perspective of Sudbury's economy to the businesses in the south of this province, as then we will be connected to the 400 series of highways. And of course, investing in strategic partnerships with business in order to attract investment and compete in a global economy.

We're seeing those investments already, Mr. Speaker. Ontario is first in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. Our government is partnering with businesses, large and small, in Sudbury and across the province. For example, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund has approved over \$148 million in funding for close to 900 different projects, leveraging nearly \$600 million from the private sector, which shows that our economic plan is working in communities across Ontario, including Sudbury. A good example of that is that Sudbury is home to Ontario's newest mine, Vale's Totten Mine. It is the first mine to open in Sudbury in over 40 years. It represents an investment of \$760 million, and by the time it ramps up to full production, 200 more people will have a job.

And let's not forget the investment of the Clean AER Project—more investment—and Glencore Xstrata and its Nickel Rim operations. Just these investments alone are not only helping Sudbury's economy but Ontario's economy as well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Tell us more.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I will. Thank you very much.

It's many of the small and medium-sized business owners I talked to during the campaign I think of when I'm speaking here. They talk about how we're seeing growth in many sectors and how others need a little bit more help. I think of the small business owner like Tay Butt, who started a small software company that now has orders for his software from all over the province. Querney business supply has been around our city for decades and is continuing to grow. Dalron Construction: John and Ron spoke to me about how they want to continue to see our city develop and how this government's continuing investments in infrastructure, transit and health care will make Sudbury and Ontario even stronger.

I can think of the 17,000-plus men and women who work in the mining supply and services sector in Sudbury. They all work for small and medium-sized enterprises that are making a difference, not only by creating good-

paying jobs for thousands, but investing in our community—through charitable events, for example.

Just this past weekend, I saw the Grossi family out at an event to raise money for a local charity. Not only do they own and operate Anmar Mechanical, Technica Mining and many, many others; these people also find the time to give back with more than just dollars, but also with their time.

That is why many of these great businesses in my riding of Sudbury applaud our government's actions when it comes to the economy. For example, the business education tax reductions have been accelerated and fully implemented for northern Ontario businesses. Businesses in my riding have benefited from a BET cut of \$8.6 million or an average cut of 26.2% based on current estimates.

So it is clear, in the by-election, that the issues of jobs, growth and maintaining our current course for recovery were a priority for the voters of Sudbury. The people of Sudbury liked our 10-year economic plan. Many of those initiatives start with the government estimates that we're talking about today. It is our plan that will provide the tools Ontario needs to seize the opportunities in changing the economy, starting with \$130 billion in infrastructure investments.

Interjection: Amazing.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It is amazing, Mr. Speaker.

It's this government that sees the opportunities in the Ring of Fire. That is why our government is taking a smart, sustainable and collaborative development approach in the Ring of Fire, which demonstrates another example of our government's strategic approach to realize the multi-generational economic component of this project. Our government has established a development corporation that will accelerate infrastructure development and provide a business structure for decision-making. That is why we are calling on the federal government to partner with us through this development corporation to build the vital infrastructure for this region, which will not only benefit northern Ontario and cities like my riding of Sudbury, but all of Ontario. Our government is setting tangible benchmarks so we can drive this opportunity, worth \$60 billion, for generations to come.

I have had the opportunity now to sit in both this House and, for over six years, in the House of Commons, representing the good people of Sudbury in both capacities. I have to say that the honour of such a role never diminishes on me, ever. To be able to stand in this place and talk about government estimates, to debate ideas and come up with solutions to make my riding and our great province better for all, is something I never take for granted.

As my inaugural speech in this place slowly comes to its conclusion, first off, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me some leeway today to veer off the debate topic a little bit; to my honourable colleagues in this place for being able to listen to my speech and give me some encouragement, thank you to all; to the people of

Sudbury for giving me their trust once again and voting me into this place; to my family, friends, and volunteers who gave of their time, thank you. Truly, Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to serve, and I look forward to the question-and-answer period, if that exists.

Merci, monsieur, et bonne chance à tous. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Just a second; sorry. I've been informed that you've already spoken on this particular debate.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No. I've been informed that you've already spoken on this particular round of the estimates debate.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to the concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. I would like to begin by saying that I believe that we're taking a balanced approach to our economy, limiting spending but also investing in those things that our families depend on. I think, as members of the Legislature, we all recognize that there's more than the ledger sheets we're talking about today. Those are the ledger sheets that are in the families that we represent collectively. When we're talking about issues of how we go forward, we have to make sure that those things that we came together to do for them are there for them. I do believe that we need to take a balanced approach.

1530

I would like to remind members on the other side, specifically the member from Nipissing, that as my colleague from Etobicoke Centre mentioned earlier, we give \$11 billion more into Confederation than we take out. So I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we keep an eye on those things that are important to families.

I would like to thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for enlightening me as to the thinking of the third party last spring in terms of what was going on. His recognizing the party to his right as a progressive party—I'm not sure we'd all agree with that on this side of the House.

But most of all, what I'd like to do today is welcome the member from Sudbury. I was impressed by his maiden speech. I had the opportunity to spend some time with him at minus 38. It was a very enjoyable experience. I know that he is passionate about his community and that he's focused on those things that are important to families.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to follow a number of my colleagues on all sides of the House here this afternoon with respect to discussing and debating the estimates of the Ministry of Finance. I say that, of course, Speaker, as someone who, as you mention, cur-

rently serves as the Minister of Transportation, but in my first two years, almost, in this Legislature I actually had the privilege of serving as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

I've listened really closely to the all of the debate and discussion here this afternoon, but I find it circumstantially interesting, I suppose, to have had the chance—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —yes, I might have just made that word up; I'm not quite sure, but it's now on the record—to follow the new member from the riding of Sudbury and also to immediately follow the current member from Ottawa South. If there's one thing that the three of us have in common, it's that we are in fact individuals who have the privilege of representing our respective communities in this place as a result of by-election results. And of course, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who stood in her place a couple of minutes ago and tried to say something into the record, Speaker, something that I believe was going to be interesting and complimentary to the member that spoke right before her—I won't put words in her mouth. It's interesting that all four of us, in fact, are in this Legislature as a result of successful by-election campaigns.

I couldn't help but listen very closely to the newly minted member from Sudbury. I also had the opportunity, like my colleague from Ottawa South, to be in Sudbury to see first-hand why things like the financial plan that has been brought forward by the Ministry of Finance over the last couple of years has had, continues to have and will have such relevance for a community like Sudbury, whether we're talking about being able to balance the books by 2017-18 so that we can continue to invest in health care, in infrastructure and in transit and transportation.

I know, having listened very closely to our new colleague from Sudbury talk about his family and talk about his young children—he knows this because of the time we spent together in Sudbury—as a person myself who has two young children, it is so important for those of us who are serving on this side of the House to continue to build this province up, to continue to move the province forward, and to continue to work with the Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Finance to make sure that, as we balance our books by 2017-18, as the Premier has said many, many times, that we don't do it in a manner that ignores or puts at risk those who require our support as a government. It's why we're investing in that crucial infrastructure, to create jobs and also to create the physical spaces and the physical infrastructure that we need as a province to continue to grow.

I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury in particular for his eloquent comments. I know he will continue to provide exemplary leadership for his community. It has been my pleasure to add my voice to this afternoon's discussion and debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to add my voice, along with some of my colleagues, to talk about estimates. Ministry of Finance information is being forwarded to us this afternoon as we look at this particular issue.

I do want to comment on comments that were made by my new colleague, the member for Sudbury. He and I have had some very interesting chats in the past couple of weeks since he joined us here in the House. In his maiden speech he talked to us about the economy, in particular, in Sudbury, and that they have a lower than average unemployment rate, at 6.1%, which is very impressive. He also talked about the potential for the Ring of Fire earning this province \$60 billion; yes, that's with a B. I think this speaks to Ontario's very progressive budget that we introduced, and that I know he believes in.

We've had very interesting chats, also, not just about the Sudbury economy but everything from the kind of contribution he wants to make here to the House right down to where he can buy shower rings in the area. I hope you got your shower rings.

I think that you will be a very effective addition to the House with the knowledge you bring, not only for your riding but for all of Ontario, and we look forward to the contributions that you make in supporting us in helping to build up Ontario. Welcome to the House. We are very much enriched by the contribution you will make to our party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Frankly, I was delighted to be here this afternoon to hear the maiden speech of Mr. Thibeault, the new member from Sudbury, Ontario. Of course, he does follow in the footsteps of previous MPPs from the great riding of Sudbury: Mr. Cimino, who was here for short period of time but certainly made a contribution during the time he was here, and I know that he made a great contribution in the city of Sudbury prior to that. Of course, prior to that my colleague the honourable Rick Bartolucci served Sudbury so extremely well from 1995 until 2011.

Mr. Speaker, we should always remind ourselves that when you serve in public life, you really do stand on the shoulders of others. Mr. Thibeault will be standing on the shoulders of others from Sudbury and throughout northern Ontario who served previously. He articulated extremely well his vision of what he will be doing here at Queen's Park and for the great people of Sudbury over the next number of weeks and months. I know that in his case he'll be here for years, with his kind of background, his kind of passion and his kind of dedication.

We also talked about estimates for the Ministry of Finance. Contained in those, of course, are estimates dealing with our very aggressive infrastructure program in the province of Ontario. We just announced—I got a note today from the wonderful people from Parry Sound, represented so well by the member across the aisle from Parry Sound–Muskoka—that we'll be building a new bridge in that community through the Community Infra-

structure Fund, something they have anticipated for quite a while. You know, that's opposition, a third party and government working together to deliver that new bridge for the wonderful people and community of Parry Sound.

We know that the member from Sudbury will be delivering many bridges and roads for the wonderful people in Sudbury. We look forward to joining him for great events in Sudbury, Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested, and it will be stacked at the end of this afternoon's debate.

Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate?

1540

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's sad that I have so little time to respond to the inaugural speech from the member for Sudbury, but I would like to mention that I am accustomed to the politics of by-elections. I completely concur that family and friends, obviously, provide the support that we need to do the important work that we do here.

It was good that the member from Sudbury mentioned the other candidates in the by-election. Certainly, Paula Peroni is a long-time friend, and we were very proud of Suzanne Shawbonquit, of course. We will elect an aboriginal woman to this House one day. It will happen.

It is the supply motion, so it was a strange place to have this inaugural speech, but I commend him on it. Of course, I look forward to working with the member from Sudbury to get that PET scanner that has long been promised by this government—working together to strengthen the health care of the people of Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Time allocated to the debate on concurrences in supply having expired, I'm going to seek a motion for each of the remaining ministries and offices not yet moved.

I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of

Aboriginal Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I move concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote is being requested. It will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Again, I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Consumer Services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Consumer Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote having been requested, it will be stacked to the end of this afternoon's debate.

Recorded votes having been demanded on certain motions for concurrence in supply, call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a notice from the chief government whip asking that the votes on concurrences in supply be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes. So ordered.

Votes deferred.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 49 at second reading, we left off at the point of questions and comments on speeches by several

government members, including Mr. Delaney. He has then the opportunity to respond—or, I guess, to have the round of two-minute questions and comments, and then we would look to him to respond.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of moments of questions and comments. I think we've had a very good debate on supply, and now we're getting ready to debate Bill 49. I know I am looking forward to the debate. I know we're going to be having a number of speakers as well.

But I just get worried with some of the efforts that the government did last week to try to restrict debate. In the previous session, they would table closure motions after closure motions. They were a government by closure and by restriction of debate. I was very discouraged with some of the decisions—I don't want to speak badly of some Speaker decisions, but I know we had two bills last week that closed prior to members of our caucus having the opportunity.

I'm glad the government is calling this bill, and I'll be participating in debate. I know there are some sections of the bill that we'd like to have amended in committee, or at least discussed in committee. We're quite supportive of the spirit and intent of this bill.

As most of you know, Bill 49 was presented in the last session of Parliament as well. I know it's a big issue in my riding, because the median age of a worker in Leeds–Grenville is about six years older than the Ontario average. I know the importance of groups like the Leeds and Grenville Immigration Partnership, which has worked diligently with job creators to try to fill the skills gap.

But I know that because of this government's disastrous policies, so many of our young people have gone to the western provinces, provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan. At one point, I had all three of my sons in the province of Alberta, because there were no job opportunities here in the province.

Ontario was once the leader, and I think we need to get some policies back in place to make us the leader again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Our critic, Peggy Sattler, will be addressing this at greater length in a few minutes, but I wanted to make a few comments about the bill. Obviously, there are some parts of this bill that may be seen as a step in the right direction, but there are still very substantial issues that remain unaddressed.

There is no certainty that Ontario will be able to set its own targets in regard to recruiting immigrants. Given the critical need for immigrants to keep our economy strong and growing, this lack of power could well be a substantial problem.

There's nothing that guarantees that the federal government will respect this legislation and will actually assist Ontario in meeting its goals. That's a substantial issue.

The bill doesn't address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants have their credentials recognized. I have to say that when my parents came here in the early 1950s, my father had been a licensed mechanic back in England, but he couldn't get any recognition for his skill and had to work for years at very low wages before he could finally have his credentials recognized.

In 2006, when I ran in the by-election to be a member of this Legislature—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I was happy you came that day.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Ms. MacLeod—I had the opportunity to talk to many in the immigrant community who were still facing exactly the same problems that my father had faced in the 1950s.

Frankly, if this bill is not going to move us forward on that issue, it's going to result in an ongoing waste of human potential and an ongoing underperformance of the Ontario economy that isn't using the full skills and training that newcomers can bring to this province.

The bill is silent on a number of other issues, like housing for newcomers. It may be a small step forward, but there are many other steps that have to be taken.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 49.

Certainly, it's tough to think of the province of Ontario or it's tough to think of the country of Canada without thinking about immigration. It's a country that has been built by our First Nations, to begin with, but then, from there, by the European settlement that followed and then the Asian settlement we're seeing today.

1550

People move to Ontario to become successful. They move to Canada to become successful. My own family moved here in the mid-1960s, when I was 11 years of age, and quite frankly, they moved here because things in Britain weren't going very well and things in Canada were going extremely well.

We moved to Toronto. I don't think there was any place we actually considered moving to other than the city of Toronto, and soon we settled down there. At that time, it was a land of opportunity. It was a place to come to where the adults themselves could do well and the kids could do well.

Along the way, as a society, we've learned more about immigration. We've learned how we can accommodate new people in our society in a much more flexible way that takes full advantage of the talents and the potential that they bring from other countries.

When we find out certain things and we make certain changes, if we're adaptable, in the legislation that governs immigration, we can actually fulfill the dreams of the people who are moving here to make better lives for themselves, but we can also make our province a better place and we can make this country a better place. We know that a strong Ontario means a strong Canada.

Certainly, Ontario is still the province of choice when it comes to people who move here, like we did in the 1960s. That hasn't changed much. When people think of moving to this country, the place they think of starting from, starting their new life, is right here in the province of Ontario.

I'm really pleased to see these changes to the Ontario Immigration Act. It's simply going to make for a better experience for the province of Ontario but also for the immigrants who move to this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise in debate of Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. I think our House leader earlier said we are generally supportive of this piece of legislation.

I would remind all members of this assembly that Ontario traditionally was the place in Canada that not only people from across Canada wanted to move to, but people from around the world. They knew when they came here, years ago, decades ago, that they could get a good job, buy a home, pay their mortgage, put their kids through school, put them through university, rely on affordable and sustainable health care and education, and then retire comfortably. That Ontario dream has faded over the last decade, and I think that is key for us to discuss during this conversation.

It's also a place that is losing its population. Our population has been declining. I received that information from my seatmate, Ernie Hardeman from Oxford. I think it's important to bring Ernie up today.

Earlier today, in a tribute to Ernest Côté, we talked about the values, as Ontarians and as Canadians, that we have. It was Mr. Hardeman who reminded me that he lived in the Netherlands at a time when he and his family had lost their freedoms. I think, as Ontarians and as Canadians, we should be very proud that this is a place where people would choose to come.

But as Mr. Hardeman will point out—and one of the criticisms the Progressive Conservative Party has with this legislation, though generally supportive—we're not doing enough to not only attract people to come to Ontario but, once they are here, to provide them with that support and opportunity that they once had, decades ago.

I look forward to continuing debate on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thank my colleagues from Leeds—Grenville, Toronto—Danforth, Oakville and Nepean—Carleton for their comments.

My colleague from Leeds—Grenville: His comments didn't have a lot to do with either the bill or the Ontario Immigration Act, but I certainly appreciate the spirit in which he offered them.

The member for Toronto—Danforth pointed out how Ontario is still getting a raw deal from the feds in immigration. That's one of the things that this bill is trying to address. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is the single worst-run area in the federal government.

My colleague from Oakville pointed out how the country and our province were built by waves of newcomers, of which he was one, and of which one of my parents was one.

People come here for a new life, a new beginning. They come here to build this country, this province and our communities. They become passionate Canadians, like the member himself, as a matter of fact. He talked a great deal about how Ontario has learned to make immigration a strategic advantage, and this is a key part. In our office in Mississauga, if you call, we're going to serve you completely, fully, in 10 different languages. We use them all.

I also have to say to my good friend from Nepean—Carleton how movingly she spoke this morning about Ernest Côté and to commend her on her remarks, which I thought were timely, sensitive, well-drafted and beautifully delivered. Although that doesn't have a lot to do with what we're talking about, it's something that I did want to say publicly. I actually sent her over a letter.

In the end, I think all three parties are going to support this bill. I think it's now time to give it the best of our consideration, get it to committee and get this thing enacted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Speaker, before I start debating Bill 49, I want to tell you that I'll be sharing my time with the members from Prince Edward—Hastings and Leeds—Grenville. With that, I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

As you know, the federal government has introduced a new Expression of Interest system that helps provinces attract the skilled workers they need and helps connect potential immigrants with jobs. I want to commend them for all the work they've done on that.

For those who don't know, the Expression of Interest program provides governments and Canadian employers access to skilled foreign workers and expedites their entry into Canada for jobs that aren't being filled by the people already in Canada. This program will allow prospective immigrants to indicate their interest in coming to Canada by providing information electronically about their skills, work experience and other attributes. If the individuals meet eligibility criteria, they will be placed in a database so they can be matched with employers who are looking for those skills.

The Expression of Interest program went into effect January 2015, and this bill would put the next step of that program in place for Ontario, including establishing an employer registry.

I expect when the government gets up to speak, they will point out that the Expression of Interest program is already in place, and they will say we should rush this legislation, as was just mentioned, through the House. So before they do that, or any more of that, I would like to point out a few facts.

First, until today, we only had one opportunity for one member of the opposition to actually speak to this bill.

Secondly, although the government often forgets this, they were ones who called the election that killed the previous version of the bill. Following the election, they were the ones who waited until the end of November to introduce this one.

We support the intent of this bill. We believe that we need to do more to attract skilled immigrants to Ontario, to ensure that they, and all Ontarians, have opportunities to succeed here and that this is a place where all parents believe their children can have a bright future. Today that simply is not the case.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be an immigrant. I was born in the Netherlands, and I am one of 15 children. My father was a farmer in Holland, and although he was making a living, he looked at the land available and realized there simply wasn't enough land for his children to have the same opportunities he had. The population density was so high that it would be difficult for his children to get involved in agriculture. So he packed up the whole family—there were only 14 children at the time; one came the other way—and moved us to Ontario, Canada, because he believed it was the land of opportunity.

I just wanted to point out that we were supposed to go—and this is how attractive Ontario was—to Manitoba to help a sugar beet farmer on the farm, because we had so many farmhands that could help. In fact, that's where our train tickets were for, but my father wanted to go to Ontario. So when the train stopped in Woodstock, Ontario, we all got off. Mr. Speaker, people believed that opportunities in Ontario were so great that we were willing to bend the rules to stay here.

Moving to Canada, and to Ontario, was a brave decision for my parents to make. It would have been easier for my father and mother to stay in Holland with their friends and family, but they wanted a better life for their children. I'm grateful to them for making that decision, because otherwise I wouldn't be here today. Neither would my nephew John, the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. Welcome to Ontario, John.

Mr. Speaker, when we arrived in Ontario, we didn't know what to expect. Today, people have more resources, like the great website welcometooxford.ca, which helps people choosing to move to my riding. But at that time we had a few surprises. What we had heard, and what we believed, was that Ontario was a place where you could succeed if you worked hard. It was a place where there were opportunities. For many people living in Ontario, that isn't the case anymore, and that reality is going to mean that potential skilled immigrants are going to look at places where the opportunities are better.

1600

One of the things that we need to recognize is that we are competing for skilled immigrants. We are competing with provinces like Alberta, who on their provincial nominee website are able to say, "Alberta's stable economy and innovative business spirit make it an ideal place to work."

And we are competing against other jurisdictions. Just this weekend, there was an article in the *Globe and Mail*

about Germany's strategy to attract more immigrants of working age, because over the next 10 years they anticipate losing 6.7 million working-age people to retirement or to other jurisdictions. It doesn't matter how great our immigration system is if people don't want to come to Ontario.

People who are emigrating today still look for many of the same things that my parents did when they chose their new home. They want a place where their children can have a better life, a place where the government is fair and laws are respected and applied equally to all, and a place where they can succeed if they work hard. Those same values are the reason I'm a Conservative.

When my father chose to come here to Ontario, Ontario was the economic engine of Canada, but today it's a have-not province. Our debt is so large that each man, woman and child in Ontario would have to contribute \$23,000 just to pay it off. Neither of those facts will convince potential immigrants that Ontario is the place where their children can have a better life.

In the government's leadoff speech, it was mentioned that a ministry survey of landed nominees found that 98% of nominees with a job offer were currently working in Ontario. What they didn't mention is that the auditor's report found that the survey's response rate was only 45%, and that the remaining nominees could not be contacted. How many of those people couldn't be contacted because they'd already moved to Alberta or another province where the opportunities were greater?

I know other speakers have already talked about the fact that between 2004 and 2013 Ontario was one of only two provinces that actually saw the number of permanent residents decline. In her recent report, the Auditor General stated, "Only half of Ontario's new immigrants were from the economic class, compared, for instance, to 87% in Saskatchewan, 78% in Manitoba and 68% in Alberta." When potential immigrants look for skilled employment, they must look at the fact that there are more jobs, for higher pay, with less taxes, in Alberta, and now they are also looking at the fact that Ontario is proposing to take an additional 2% of their salary for a pension program.

Ontario should be proud that we can still boast that we are a multicultural province. I've listened to some of the stories that members told when speaking on this bill of emigrating to Canada, or of their parents and grandparents coming here. I think there are many places in the world that would be surprised to learn that immigrants can have that type of opportunity. But when it comes to economic opportunities, the future just doesn't look that bright. If you want to attract economic immigrants, that needs to change.

I think we all agree that Ontario has a skilled trades shortage. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada did a study on this issue that included a survey of over 1,500 employers. They found skill gaps in four sectors that together make up 38% of Ontario's employment: manufacturing; health care; professional, scientific and technical services; and financial industries. Three quarters of the surveyed employers said that skills requirements in their

business had increased over the past decade, and another three quarters said that they will increase further over the next decade. They estimated that the skills gap cost the Ontario economy up to \$24.3 billion in forgone GDP, as well as \$4.4 billion in federal tax revenues and \$3.7 in provincial tax revenues, annually.

In addition, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce found that, depending on the sector being surveyed, between 21% and 52% of employers reported difficulty hiring someone with the right qualifications. Part of the solution is matching training and education with the skills that are needed and reforming the apprenticeship ratios so more of our young people can enter the skilled trades. But the other part of the solution—and this is the part that this bill tries to address—is to attract more immigrants with those skills and ensure that immigrants who come here can use their skills.

Mr. Speaker, this bill takes some small steps towards addressing the problem that unfortunately a number of skilled immigrants face. They arrive here ready to contribute, but their education and qualifications aren't recognized, so they can't work in their field. If we're serious about making Ontario the land of opportunity again and serious about attracting skilled labour, this is a problem the government needs to address.

If you're going to once again become the economic engine of Canada and make Ontario a place that people want to come to, the government has to get serious about solving some of these problems, not point fingers at us because we were elected government in 1995 or the NDP because they were elected in 1990. They can't keep blaming the federal government or municipalities. The people of Ontario expect and deserve better than that.

That leads me to another significant problem with implementing the program. One of the major parts of this bill is putting in place a system that allows Ontario employers to connect with potential immigrants to find skilled labour they need—and that assumes that jobs are available. We support the goal of this legislation, but Ontario faces some significant economic challenges today that are going to make it difficult for this program to work as intended.

This program works for businesses that are expanding and growing. In today's Ontario, many businesses are in fact downsizing or closing their doors. Heinz, Kellogg's, Hershey's, E.D. Smith, CanGro—business after business has shut their doors. All of us have heard from businesses in our ridings that are struggling with the cost of hydro, red tape, taxes and economic challenges. All of us have heard from businesses that have been approached by other jurisdictions with attempts to get them to move. They have been offered reduced taxes, lower energy costs and even free training for their future employees. The proposed pension plan would just be one more thing that drives businesses out of Ontario.

This legislation won't work to help connect potential immigrants with jobs if no one in Ontario is hiring. There are already some questions about how Ontario's immigration program has been working. Again, in her annual

report, the Auditor General published the results of her audit of the provincial nominee program. For those who aren't aware, under the provincial nominee program, provinces and territories can nominate people who meet specific local labour market needs for permanent residence. The auditor found that “between October 2011 and November 2013, about 260 approved files were flagged for follow-up. We reviewed a sample of them and noted that only 8% had” received that follow-up.

She also found that despite public statements “that applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis, certain applications are given priority and processed at least three times faster than non-prioritized files,” including applications where the representative was a former staff member with the program.

The auditor also found that “Employers did not need to attempt to recruit locally for 76% of job offers made to nominee applicants....” That was one of the requirements; 76% were not required to do it.

As well, the auditor discovered problems with staff training, partly caused by the number of temporary or seasonal workers. We know that this is a practice throughout the government. Instead of hiring full-time people, who would show up on the government documents as employees, they hire people on contracts so they can say the number of staff isn't increasing. In this case, the result was improperly trained people making decisions that had a huge impact on people's lives. This decision determines a person or family's future. It's not a responsibility that should be taken lightly or done by someone less qualified just so the government can post reduced staffing numbers.

In this case, it may also have contributed to fraud. During her review, the auditor investigated “allegations about the program's operation and the risk that it was continuing to consider applications from individuals and organizations who were suspected to have been involved with immigration fraud and/or illegal immigration-linked investment schemes.” It seems from her report that when staff working on the program discovered fraud, they weren't willing to tell anyone that there was any, and there was nothing to stop those people from reapplying or acting as representatives for other applicants. According to her report, based on the recommendations from the auditor's office, the ministry “formally referred certain case information to law enforcement in September 2014.”

1610

One of the things that was particularly concerning to me was that many of her findings had a common thread: When a problem was discovered, it was delayed or buried. Unfortunately, it is typical of this government that when there is a problem, their solution seems to be to hide it or blame others rather than trying to solve it.

I want to share a few quotes from the auditor's report: “For example, in 2013, when the team found that 38% of a sample of foreign-worker nominees who had since become permanent residents were suspected to have misrepresented themselves”—this is a quote from the auditor—“program management requested that the team

not share lessons learned from the results of the investigations with processing staff, thereby missing an opportunity to educate them and enhance due diligence processes.” I want to emphasize a point there: Program management requested that the team not share the lessons learned—nothing could be further from what needs to be done.

The auditor’s report also said: “The ministry delayed formally reporting information relating to potential abuse of the program to the federal government and the proper law enforcement agencies.” We found it and we hid it.

And the quote goes on: “After the ministry’s program integrity team recommended that case information about applicants and applications of concern be referred to outside parties for further work, the ministry took up to 15 months to report this information to the federal government and law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the ministry did not provide vital personal information to them, thereby potentially delaying corrective action against individuals who have been abusing the program.” These are the quotes from the Auditor General. I’m not just here supposing that’s what happened; she found that in her review.

I want to commend the auditor for the work she does. In opposition we sometimes face challenges obtaining the information that we need and having the resources to analyze detailed financial documents, so the work of the Auditor General and her office is essential to ensuring that programs work as intended, that taxpayers receive value for money, and, in the case of organizations like Ornge, that waste and misuse of tax dollars be discovered and stopped.

I’m pleased that the Auditor General chose to use resources of her office to investigate the provincial nominee program, and that the minister has said that some of her concerns are going to be addressed in this bill.

As you know, I’ve asked several times in this Legislature for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ask the auditor to investigate the Housing Services Corp., the organization that all affordable housing providers in Ontario are required to purchase their natural gas and insurance through.

Like Ornge, this organization has set up multiple for-profit subsidiaries. Like Ornge, they’ve seen questionable expenses, such as the current CEO travelling to Europe seven times within 16 months. Like Ornge, we’ve seen questions about salaries. In fact, a Housing Services Corp. salary budget went from \$1.25 million in 2005 to \$7.5 million just seven years later.

During a review of the provincial nominee program, the auditor was able to find the problems so they could be corrected, and we believe that she should do the same for the affordable housing money being diverted by the Housing Services Corp.

I want to ask all members of the government side to help us ensure that affordable housing dollars go to help vulnerable people by asking the Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to request the Auditor General to investigate the Housing Services Corp.

Housing, as was mentioned earlier, is also important for immigrants. Without the proper housing, again, we will not attract them.

One of the other things that is missing in this bill is a connection between encouraging immigrants to come to Ontario and ensuring they have the services they need when they get here. This goes beyond settlement services; it’s about services that they expect in their communities, such as schools for their children.

During the ROMA/Good Roads combined conference this week, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of municipalities which are mandated to grow under Places to Grow. Many of the immigrants impacted by this bill will settle in these communities. What I heard was disturbing: One government ministry is telling them they need to expand, but other government ministries are not keeping pace with providing services and funding that they need to accommodate those people.

In one case, the Ministry of Education actually criticized a municipality for growing and told them to stop because they couldn’t keep up with the new schools they needed. I heard from the city of Brantford. They were almost out of development land for homes or businesses. Again, the government has told them to grow, but the city says there’s no land left to grow on. They have asked the government for help in negotiating with the county, but so far it hasn’t happened.

If we’re going to encourage people to come to Ontario, we need to ensure that they can find places to live—a house or an apartment—where there is space in the school for their children and where the local hospital can take good care of them if there is an emergency. That’s the type of planning the government should be doing.

The Ontario my father emigrated to, the one with all those opportunities for his children, isn’t the one we have today. Instead, this government has created an Ontario where red tape and the cost of doing business often prevent those who work hard from succeeding, an Ontario where the government is the subject of multiple police investigations.

Many people know that there is a strong Dutch community in my riding.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, don’t we?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: There is—very strong—and me, too. There is also Italian, Portuguese, Hungarian, Polish, German and many others. In fact, the last census found that in Oxford there were people who spoke 70 different languages. I ask the government to ensure that all those people have the opportunities my father came here for: the opportunity to succeed through hard work, the opportunity to live in a community where the laws are fair and the opportunity to see your children have a better life. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member indicated that he was sharing his time with the member for Leeds–Grenville. The member for Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, also the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

I just want to continue in the vein of the member for Oxford. I know that we've indicated—I think we've had one speaker to the bill already in this forum—that there are some concerns. Although there is general support, there are some concerns that we'd like to see dealt with, either through debate or, obviously, through committee. Overall, I think the bill does take some very important steps to align Ontario with some of the federal immigration policy changes. These are critical steps, too, because we know that our province's future economic prosperity is directly tied to our ability to attract the best and the brightest from around the world.

I will say it is a shame that the government has taken so long to introduce these reforms designed to help newcomers get settled in Ontario. However, for reasons I'll get to shortly, while this is good bill, I'm not hopeful that it will actually do a lot to attract newcomers to the province.

As was mentioned, I am sharing the balance of the time with the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. For that reason, I'm going to focus my remarks on Bill 49 and what it means to the people who elected me to the Legislature. I can tell you that although I represent a predominantly rural riding in Leeds–Grenville, in eastern Ontario, this is a bill that promises to make reforms to immigration policy that are just as important to my riding in rural eastern Ontario as to every other corner of the province. That's a point that needs to be made: Too often, when we discuss immigration issues, there is a tendency to think it only matters in Ontario's largest cities and urban areas. That's far from reality. We need to recognize that the talents newcomers have to offer are important in building prosperous futures for businesses and communities in every corner of Ontario, which includes Leeds–Grenville.

We have a proud tradition of welcoming newcomers from around the globe with open arms. These folks have made an indelible mark on our communities, adding to the richness of our culture and our local economy.

1620

It's no coincidence that one of the signature events in my riding is the annual multicultural festival held every May in the city of Brockville. For more than three decades, thousands have attended this event, which highlights our diversity and the rich tapestry of cultures that make Leeds–Grenville such a wonderful place to call home.

I also think of my good friend Terry O'Reilly, one of the co-owners of Pricedex Software in Brockville. I've had many, many opportunities to tour Terry's company. I can tell you, it's one of the most diverse groups of employees you'll find anywhere in the province. Terry is very proud of this. I think it's a valuable lesson for all MPPs to remember that immigration issues aren't just something that concern members of urban ridings.

Frankly, that's why it's a shame that I suspect we'll see the government soon looking to stifle debate on Bill

49 through closure or through some other means—something they've done with so many, many pieces of legislation. The ability to bring the perspective from all of our ridings to talk about how legislation will impact our communities, our employers and our residents is the reason we're all here.

It diminishes this place when we limit debate on legislation brought forward by the government. It's bad enough when the calls for ending debate come from cabinet ministers and the government House leader. Even in our beginning debate here this afternoon, up until Mr. Hardeman from Oxford and I spoke, we really only had one speaker to this bill and there were already calls, through a prepared text from the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, that debate needs to collapse.

We had the ORPP legislation here last week. We had 19 members in Her Majesty's loyal opposition who were unable to speak to that bill because the government invoked ending the debate. It's disappointing when the government shortchanges constituents from other ridings that don't have the opportunity to speak and allow those voices to be heard.

In the context of today's debate it's also critical that we look at exactly what is happening to immigration trends in our province. We look back over the past decade or so, and there's an obvious trend that is unfolding. In 2001 and 2002, approximately 60% of immigrants to Canada settled right here in the province of Ontario. But from 2003 on, there has been a steady decline. The numbers speak for themselves and they speak very loudly.

The result is that in 2011, Ontario's share of newcomers to this great country was just 40%. That's an incredible decline and it means our province is missing out on everything these newcomers have to offer. So I guess the question is: What happened in 2003 that would have triggered such a decline in the province? Ah, yes. I think I remember: 2003 was the year Dalton McGuinty became Premier and put the wheels in motion on a set of policies and, really, overall management that has ruined our economy and made Ontario a fiscal basket case.

The decline in immigrants seeking a new start in Ontario and the downward slide in our economy under this Liberal government, I suggest, is no coincidence. We know companies want to invest in well-run provinces, and, in fact, so do new Canadians. Just as we're seeing more companies choose to look elsewhere, more and more newcomers to Canada are deciding Ontario just simply isn't worth the risk. Now, I know some of the members don't want to hear this, but as I said, the facts speak otherwise.

I'm not trying to take any cheap shots at the government. I think other members can do that. I just think it's critical in today's context of Bill 49 that we let those statistics speak for themselves. Our caucus, as I've said at the outset, is generally supportive of the bill. There are some good reforms there, but I think in reality it's simply not enough to think we can bring more immigrants to Ontario by working together as legislators. We need to

do more, because the underlying issue is the broken economy.

Immigrants want to settle where they and their families will have the best chance for success, and right now—I know they don't want to hear this—they're not picking Ontario. It's bad news. I mentioned earlier in this bill that I did want to provide some context for Leeds–Grenville, and I want to highlight something.

The most recent Local Labour Market Planning Report for the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board talks about how important this issue is to a rural riding like Leeds–Grenville. Before I begin, I want to put a plug in for Frank O'Hearn and his team at the 1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board. Frank is the executive director of the organization. I had a chance to meet with him during the winter break. I was troubled to learn that there were some rumblings around his organization's future because of some changes the government is proposing. I'd just like to take this opportunity to remind the government—and in this case, for this organization, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities in particular—about how important this organization is. The work and invaluable information they provide employers and economic development officials in my riding is critical to charting our course in building our economy. While we do need to look at how to become more efficient and spend our resources wisely across government, the minister needs to understand how much value there is in retaining this expertise at the local level.

Back to the board's report and its connection to the debate that we're having this afternoon: Our region's employers are being squeezed for labour supply because of the combination of low population growth and an aging workforce. As an example, the report notes that the median age in Leeds–Grenville is 46.7 years, compared to the Ontario figure of 40.4 years. I should also point out that in eastern Ontario, we're exporting our youth to other provinces, like Alberta and Saskatchewan, where there are simply more opportunities for them to find work. That is also leading to a shortage of skilled labour for employers desperately trying to fill jobs. So it's a huge challenge we're facing, and I know Leeds–Grenville isn't alone.

Immigration, of course, becomes the key to meeting this challenge. As the workforce development board's report states, and I'm going to quote it, Speaker, "There is a low organic population growth which points to a need to attract more international and provincial migrants to the area."

The picture being painted here is that the mismanagement of our economy is a double whammy to employers in Leeds–Grenville. First, the economic climate makes it harder for them to get the edge on competitors—or plants within their company—in other provinces or around the world. Secondly, they're finding it harder and harder to find those skilled employees they need to compete, because newcomers to Canada are choosing provinces other than Ontario. Sadly, Bill 49 is not going to fix that.

To the government, we say: Let's work together, obviously, and get Bill 49 passed, once we've had a chance to have a full debate, not a contracted debate by the government. But let's also give some recognition that this legislation isn't, on its own, the reason we're going to solve the underlying problem of why fewer immigrants are settling in Ontario. I think we'd all agree that that recognition starts with the government tabling a budget with a real plan to create jobs and get Ontario back to fiscal balance. A province where waste, scandal and, frankly, incompetence have come to define its government isn't one in which newcomers are going to decide to make a new life. Until this government wakes up to that fact, I'm afraid we'll continue to struggle to hang on to our own best and brightest, let alone attract from other countries around the world.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll defer to my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings has the floor.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to pick up where my colleague from Leeds–Grenville ended on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

I do have a lot to add to the debate, and I did have the opportunity just over a year ago, I believe it was, when I was the critic for citizenship and immigration at that time, to bring comments on the first evolution of this bill. But I would like to say that I have had the opportunity for two and a half years or so to hold the role of chair of community outreach for our party, the Progressive Conservative Party. During that time, I've had the opportunity to meet people throughout various communities in Ontario, but particularly here in the GTA, which is the multicultural capital of Canada and quite possibly North America. We have a beautiful mosaic of people living mostly in harmony here in the GTA and across Ontario, and they bring so much to this province's rich cultural history. Of course, it started a long time ago, as we're all immigrants to this country and to this province.

1630

I have been in this position as chair of outreach for about two years now. We just went through a really interesting time, as the lunar new year is upon us. This is the Year of the Goat, Sheep or Ram; it just depends on which community you are from, but this is supposed to be a rather calm year, according to the moon. The lunar new year says that this is supposed to be a calm year and that there are not going to be that many explosive issues that occur.

Some may argue that there already have been some explosive issues for our government here in Ontario, perhaps in Sudbury with an investigation that's under way there, but I digress.

Last year was the Year of the Horse, and things were supposed to be happening fast. Now we're on to the Year of the Sheep.

I have had the opportunity to meet many people in the Vietnamese community, the Korean community and the

Chinese community here in the GTA. As a matter of fact, a couple of weeks ago, up in our caucus room, we had the opportunity to bring people in from all of those communities and have our own lunar new year celebration. I think a lot of that was the opportunity for us as party members and caucus members to reach out to members of the various communities. They very much understand the fiscal responsibility that we stand for in our party, and the fact that what's happening in the province right now doesn't meet their value system.

They understand that, in order for us to prosper as a community, we have to look after our finances, and we have to be fiscally responsible as a government—something that this government, the Liberal government, has been very abhorrent in accomplishing. Unemployment in Ontario is up around 7%. It's completely unacceptable, and I believe it's now 92 consecutive months that the unemployment rate in Ontario has been higher than the national average—something like that. It's a long, long time.

My friend from Leeds–Grenville just mentioned a few minutes ago the fact that fewer and fewer newcomers are choosing Ontario, and the main reason that they're not coming to Ontario is because there is better opportunity for them to get a job in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They're prospering in the western provinces. They're going through a little bit of a hiccup right now in Alberta, but there is an opportunity here to grow and create jobs in Ontario, and this government is letting down not just the people who live in Ontario, but the people who want to come to Canada and get a job in Ontario. They're not living up to their responsibilities as a government.

I think it's only fitting, with the miners in town right now, that we bring up the fact that Ontario has slipped from being one of the top mineral-producing jurisdictions in the world down to number 23, and this has all happened because this government has been asleep at the switch. They've been asleep at the wheel for huge projects and huge opportunity, where Saskatchewan has taken advantage of potash; newcomers are coming to Ontario and then heading out to Saskatchewan because there's more opportunity there. Or what's happening out in Alberta in the oil sector: There's the opportunity for them to get jobs in Alberta, so that's where they're going.

Here in Ontario, we've been sitting idle on the Ring of Fire now for 10 years. Nothing seems to be happening, and I know that those who are going to be attending the events with the mining convention that's under way in town, the PDAC convention that's in town right now, are going to be talking about that, because we've been hearing it in our caucus: the fact that Ontario continues to slip, continues to slide down the ratings systems that are out there, and the Ring of Fire, that great opportunity in northern Ontario and James Bay, isn't being seized by this government.

The fact that our province is mired in debt—the province is now approaching \$325 billion in debt. These people who are coming here are educated. They do their

homework. They know where the opportunity is. They see what's happening here in Ontario, and they're choosing to go out west. With \$20 billion of debt added this year alone to a \$12.5-billion deficit that we're dealing with in Ontario, we're not able to look after the infrastructure; we're not able to look after our health care system in this province, because we're paying far too much money—\$11 billion a year—in interest payments on the debt. That's money that's not going into our infrastructure and our health care. The reason that potential newcomers to Canada are choosing the western provinces is quite obvious.

Let's talk about some of the other communities that I've had the opportunity to spend some time with over the last little while. On Saturday, I had the opportunity to join the National Council of Canadian Tamils, the NCCT. They had their big gala up in Scarborough. It was a very well-attended event. All of the political parties at the federal and provincial level and a lot of our municipal counterparts were there. There's a population and there's a community that's growing in Ontario. The Tamil community has come here and they've started businesses. They were telling me on Saturday night that they're not going to be able to grow their businesses in Ontario because of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that's coming. A lot of them are small business operators. Their businesses don't have a pension plan, so they're going to be exposed to this ORPP scheme that is going to be taking money out of the pockets not only of the employers, but of the employees, as well. They can't afford to live here in this province right now. It's a tax. It simply is a tax, and this is another detractor for people wanting to come to Ontario to live, to set up a business and to have a better opportunity for their families. They were telling me the other night at this dinner that Toronto and the GTA and Ontario were their number one choice when they arrived here but the cost of living in Ontario is getting more and more expensive every day and the opportunity for them to raise their families is becoming more and more difficult with each day that passes. They watch things like the ORPP coming down the pike—and we just rushed through debate on the ORPP here in the Legislature the other day. They're also hearing about things like a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system that's coming. Finally, when the price at the pump starts to go down a little bit, the Ontario government, this Liberal government, wants to slap on a carbon tax or some kind of cap-and-trade scheme that's going to make it more expensive to drive their vehicles, which is going to make it more and more expensive for every product in the province of—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, Speaker, my favourite standing order 23(b)(i)—I'm afraid this has little to do with the subject under discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, it's always an opportunity to remind members that their

remarks have to be relevant to the debate. But I hear the member speaking to Bill 49, and he has the floor.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you. Obviously, the member across the way wasn't listening very closely, because we were talking about—the reason that people aren't coming in droves to Ontario like they had been in the past is because this is becoming a less and less desirable place for them to come to because of the cost of living, and the fact that you're talking about slapping carbon taxes and cap and trades and ORPP pension taxes on people is making it even less desirable.

Let's look at some stats: Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls in the economic immigration category. That's the lowest of any Canadian province. I'll tell you that one again: Approximately 51% of immigration to Ontario falls into the economic immigration category. So we're not doing a very good job at attracting those who fill jobs that we need here in Ontario. Fewer and fewer jobs are available in Ontario, but we're not doing a very good job matching either. It's the lowest of any Canadian province. The national average for economic immigration across Canada's provinces is approximately 70%, so we're about 20 percentage points below that. One explanation for that could very well be the lower employment rate for new Canadians in Ontario, which currently sits at 75.4%, according to the Centre for Immigration and Community Services. The number is well below that of provincial leaders, like Alberta and Manitoba, which have employment rates for new Canadians in excess of 82%.

1640

That was one of the themes that I heard from people as I was doing my small business round tables across the province. I had the opportunity in my first couple of years here at Queen's Park to serve as the small business critic. A lot of the people who I spoke with in that capacity and also in my citizenship and immigration portfolio were telling me that they were promised one thing in their home country before they arrived here in Ontario, and that was that they were going to have the opportunity to get a job in their chosen field. In a lot of cases, I would speak to somebody who was trained as a physician in their own country. A lot of the hospitals that we're talking about in their chosen country were equally comparable to the type of hospitals that we have here, with the technology we have here and the advancement that we have here. It wasn't as if they worked in a MASH unit somewhere, is what I'm trying to get across. They had the opportunity to work with the latest equipment.

They were told when they arrived here that they would have an opportunity to get a job in their chosen field, whether it was in medicine or whatever it might be. But when they arrived and touched down at Pearson international airport in Mississauga and they went through the processes of getting a job here—and these were their words—they were told that they were a zero, that they weren't going to have the opportunity to get the job in their chosen field.

We all talk about it when we hop in a cab and head to an event here in Toronto. Quite often, you'll strike up a conversation with the cab driver and they'll tell you that when they were in their country of origin they were working as a doctor; and here they are working as a cab driver.

I had the opportunity up in Brampton to meet with a couple of gentlemen who were foreign-trained doctors. One is working as a security guard here in Toronto and another is working as a real estate agent up in the Brampton area. They just don't have the opportunity here that they were promised they would have. They're willing to pass—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, this has to do with credentialing and it has to do with what happens at the provincial level.

I have an example of a young lady who is in my riding. Her name is Jennifer Ireland. She grew up in the Bancroft area and went to North Hastings High School. She went to university here in Toronto and then went over to Scotland to take her medical courses. She is now a pediatrician. We need pediatricians. Especially in eastern Ontario, where I'm from, there's a shortage of pediatricians. She is unable to get a residency here in Canada, in Ontario, in her home community, because she's a foreign-trained doctor.

These are the types of issues that we need to be addressing in this legislation that we aren't addressing in this legislation. We need medical professionals, especially in the underserved areas of the province. We have the people who want to come from abroad. They grew up and lived their formative years in Bancroft, in Ontario. They go away to school to get their medical credentials and then they're not recognized in this province. So we have a problem there, especially when we have a shortage of pediatricians.

We have a hospital in Trenton, Trenton Memorial Hospital, part of the Quinte Health Care chain, that is constantly bringing in doctors to work from out of the area because they can't find the doctors to work in that underserved part of the province. It's the same thing up north. There's a shortage of medical professionals in North Hastings and Bancroft. There are a lot of newcomers to our province who would love the opportunity, but they can't because the government doesn't have what it takes to tackle that issue of credentialing with the various organizations they need to tackle those issues with.

Let's move on. According to Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration stats from a couple of years ago, the number of federal skilled-worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of this government. The number of federal skilled-worker applicants landing in Ontario has fallen 57% under the watch of the Dalton McGuinty-Kathleen Wynne Liberal government here in Ontario. It's now below the average—well below the average—of those from across Canada.

It's prosperity that fuels immigration. As I mentioned earlier, these people who are living abroad and consider-

ing locating in Ontario or considering coming to Canada have access to the Internet. They have access to all of the information on the various provinces in Canada and the States, for that matter. Right now, those people, in far greater numbers than in the past, are choosing the Western provinces because Ontario isn't offering them the opportunity to prosper like we once did. It's a serious problem.

When we were prosperous not so long ago, we were attracting more new Canadians to Ontario. The finance ministry's own numbers will bear this out. From 1997 until approximately 2002, this province experienced one of the greatest booms in immigration that we had seen in the last 40 years; 1997 to 2002 also coincides with one of the greatest economic booms that this province has seen, and that was during the Conservatives' time in power here at Queen's Park. There was a Conservative government that created millions of jobs and attracted them from all around the world.

People go where the jobs are. It's that simple. When they are coming to a jurisdiction to live and raise a family, they want to make sure that there's the opportunity to do that. Unfortunately, Ontario, right now, is down on that list.

As has been pointed out a couple of different times here this afternoon, we continue to see these companies closing shop and moving. The member from Kitchener—Conestoga—I heard him earlier this afternoon mentioning the Schneiders factory and the fact that the last bologna has made its way off the line at the Schneiders factory. It's this kind of thing that's—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They're moving to Hamilton.

Mr. Todd Smith: Well, where did Wrigley's go? Where did Heinz go? I'm asking. Where did Heinz go?

Interjection: Kellogg's.

Mr. Todd Smith: Where did Kellogg's go? There are so many examples of companies that have left Ontario because it's a less desirable jurisdiction than it once was. They are leaving because of soaring electricity rates. They are soaring because of increased red tape. The costs of doing business in this province continue to rise and make this a less desirable jurisdiction to locate a business, to sustain a business. I hear it from my Quinte Manufacturers Association representatives all the time. I meet with them on a quarterly basis at my office, and we talk about the state of their environment.

We've been very, very fortunate for the most part in the Quinte region and in eastern Ontario to keep the companies that we have here, but there have been some who have had to close up shop. But all of them, Mr. Speaker—all of them—are telling me that they are feeling the pressure. They are feeling the pressure, because of the rising electricity rates and the rising and increased red tape that they have to deal with, to stay here in Ontario.

A lot of them have parent companies that they have to answer to, and they have to defend why they are keeping the plant in Ontario open, why they are keeping the Belleville plant open. There is a lot of pressure there for

these plant managers in my region who have located there and set up a home and raised their family there to convince the parent company—whether they are in North Carolina, whether they're in the Middle East or whether they're in the United States—why they should keep that plant open in eastern Ontario because of the pressures that exist and the opportunities elsewhere that are there for them to move. When you talk about bringing in a carbon tax, a cap-and-trade system and things like the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, it certainly doesn't make them feel any more comfortable about being here in Ontario.

The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants did their study. The number one concern that they identified among new Canadians was unemployment. Almost 62% of new Canadians identify employment as their biggest concern. It's a huge concern for all of us in Ontario right now, but especially new Canadians.

When new Canadians are saying that that's one of their largest concerns, that's a problem that we're dealing with when we're trying to attract newcomers to our province. That doesn't just include newcomers; it includes new business and new industry that's going to create jobs as well. There are some good things in this bill, and I think that by making some amendments at committee, we can certainly make this a bill that can do some good.

1650

We talked about the provincial nominee program. I know the previous speakers who have had the opportunity to speak on this have already mentioned the PNP, the provincial nominee program. We would like to see more spaces allocated for Ontario as well, but we have to have the opportunity for those investors and those companies to have the spaces available to provide that sponsorship in the PNP. That has to happen as well.

I have another study here by OCASI. It shows that almost two thirds of new Canadians come to Ontario have at least completed trade school. We need to get those new Ontarians into jobs where they're best able to use their skills, but we also have to have jobs available for them. We can reform the system as much as we want, but until we have the jobs, we just don't have the answer.

What this government has been doing is bringing in bodies like the College of Trades. When we talk about skilled trades, we have to talk about the College of Trades, which is making it more difficult for businesses, as well, in Ontario to succeed, expand and create new jobs. There is a review under way at the College of Trades—I know we all are aware of that, and the fact that the College of Trades hasn't done what it was set out to do.

The College of Trades has created what some of my colleagues refer to as trade cops, who are out there duplicating the job of Ministry of Labour officials, and going onto job sites and making the activities that are happening on those job sites come to a grinding halt and slowing down business in the province of Ontario. I don't believe that was the intent of the Ontario College of Trades, but that's one of the unfortunate consequences as

a result of bringing in the College of Trades, making it more difficult for new positions to be created for these businesses.

Hon. Jeff Leal: You should raise a glass to that.

Mr. Todd Smith: We can look at all the different pieces of legislation; I've outlined a few of them already.

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: You know, my friend across the way brings up the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act. Indeed, we should raise a glass to Ontario. We passed that private member's bill last week, but that's exactly the type of legislation we need in this province. That's the type of legislation we should see from this government. It's legislation like that that's going to create jobs and opportunity for people here in Ontario.

I just had the Wine Council of Ontario up in my office, talking about the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act and some of the red tape they're dealing with in that industry. There's every opportunity there for that industry to grow—the wine industry, the craft beer industry, the craft cider industry and the craft distillers. There's every opportunity there for them to grow. Instead we're getting pieces of legislation coming forward from the government that are doing absolutely nothing to create jobs in our province.

The type of private member's bill like Raise a Glass to Ontario can help to set this province on the right path to creating jobs, not just for people in Ontario but for newcomers to Ontario as well. The Wine Council of Ontario, moments ago, told me that they have created 14,000 jobs in that sector—14,000 jobs in the wine sector—but the potential for them to explode and create double that number of jobs exists. All they need is a helping hand from the government to clear the path of red tape and allow that type of growth to occur in the wine industry—the VQA industry in Ontario—and in the craft beer industry. We have such great products here and so much to be proud of in Ontario that we should be making the most of that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: See, I gave you a whole new speech.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Leal, the Minister of Agriculture, for allowing me to go off on that tangent and talk about Raise a Glass to Ontario.

You know what? I do believe in the potential of Ontario. I think we all do. That's why we're here as members of provincial Parliament. I knew that when I arrived in Ontario from New Brunswick back in the early 1990s, I came to Ontario because there were a lot more jobs and a lot more opportunity here in Ontario in the 1990s. I worry about the fact that my young daughters, who are 12 and 14, aren't going to have the opportunity that I've had to have a successful job in broadcasting prior to coming here. They are not going to have the opportunity to stay in Ontario unless we turn the economic situation around here in Ontario. We need some bills coming from this government that are going to do that, that are going to stimulate growth, that are going to stimulate economic activity, that are going to clear the red tape and allow not just our children—and I know Jeff has a young girl as

well. We want them to stay here. We want them to be prosperous in Ontario, just like we want our newcomers from all around the world to come to Ontario. We've got a lot of work to do, and this is a small step in making that happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House, and it's an incredible honour to be able to speak on immigration in Ontario because, as are many of us, I'm also the descendant of an immigrant. My grandfather came with 14 kids. One of them was my Uncle Ernie, the MPP from Oxford county. One of them was my mother, Georgina.

My father was also an immigrant, and my father was sponsored by the Premier of New Brunswick to come work on his farm. My father told me stories about getting off the boat, going in a cart, and all he remembered was blackflies and rocks. When his year was over, he went back to Holland. In another year, he was sponsored again by the Premier of New Brunswick and he went back again. And in another year, he went back to Holland.

The third time, he was sponsored by a family in Alberta. They were supposed to have a dairy farm and he was going to work—because he wanted to be a farmer and there was no ability to do that in Holland after the war. He went to Alberta on the train. The person picked him up in the carriage and they took him to the farm. He had a couple of cows and a couple of horses. My dad had a little bit of money. He got back on the train and he got off the train in Woodstock, and that's where he met my mom.

I'm also married to an immigrant. I'm certainly glad that she didn't get off the plane at a place she wasn't supposed to, because I love her very much.

It's really important that we take the time to talk about this bill, because immigration to this province is what built this province and it's one of the things that we have to make sure we concentrate on to keep building this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say this is a wonderful opportunity to hear about different immigration stories. I bet there has been no other Legislature ever in the history of this country where we've had an uncle-nephew immigration story being told on the same day.

I have to say, though, that it's very, very disappointing to hear members of the opposition really badmouthing Ontario, in effect telling immigrants to Ontario that they made a bad choice, that they should have gone to Alberta. You know, over 100,000 immigrants come every year to this province, and they've made a very good choice. On this side of the House, we're proud of Ontario. We're proud of the place that we have built over decades and, indeed, centuries. It's a wonderful place to live.

I want to take a moment, because this goes back—my PhD thesis, and if any of you are needing to sleep, you

might want to read this, is about immigration. It's the importance that we have immigrants come to Ontario, that we have immigrants who are moving to all corners of Ontario. I'd be happy to provide the reference to my thesis for anyone who wants to learn more. But it actually is interesting.

This bill has given me some opportunity to look at the Ministry of Finance website. We have some very talented demographers, many of them trained at Western, who work in the Ministry of Finance and look at our demographic projections. If you actually do your research, you'll see that the number of immigrants coming to Ontario is robust. Listening to the members opposite, you'd think the numbers had plummeted. That simply isn't true Speaker. We welcome in excess of 100,000 immigrants. Over 300 people a day start their new life in Ontario. We welcome them. We want them to prosper. We want to do everything government can do to give them those opportunities.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: This has been a good hour, a presentation from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He's known for his tremendous work over recent years with various new-arrival communities in the province of Ontario.

The presentations from the members for Leeds–Grenville and Oxford again reiterate why we, as opposition, support Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. It needs to be harmonized with federal initiatives, at any rate.

It's so interesting to hear the member for Oxford talking about the trains stopping in Woodstock. I understand that at that time, there would have been a sugar beet grower in Manitoba who probably had trouble getting his crop off, with 14 fewer people to harvest that crop. Again, it's Ontario's gain. Now we have John Vanthof and Ernie Hardeman in the Ontario Legislature.

The Dutch community has had a tremendous contribution in my riding, particularly since the 1950s, to religious life; social, cultural and economic life; and agribusiness, as has the Hungarian community—the advent of 100 years of tobacco down my way. So many people came over from Europe after the two great wars: Czechoslovakian, Lithuanian and certainly Polish—and Belgian. We have probably the largest Belgian community anywhere in North America.

When you think back to my riding 60 or 70 years ago, my grandfather was a federal MP at the time. Because of this immigration, primarily from Europe, the riding of Norfolk was the most ethnically diverse riding in Ontario, back when the city of Toronto was a WASP city.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to stand on behalf of the constituents of Windsor–Tecumseh and speak this afternoon on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration

Act, following comments by members from Oxford, Leeds–Grenville, and Prince Edward–Hastings.

I'm really lucky. I am a descendant of the United Empire Loyalists. Captain John Hatfield came to Nova Scotia in 1784. There is a book about him; they trace all descendants down. When the book was written, my dad was the fifth generation. I'm the sixth, my kids are the seventh, and their kids are the eighth. We can trace our roots back to the United Empire Loyalists, which is good.

My wife's parents came from Slovakia and Hungary, first to Sudbury—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: You did meet; that's right. She's chair of the public school board down in Windsor, and you were down there visiting the schools.

From Slovakia and Hungary, they first went to Sudbury and then into Windsor.

Windsor, I believe, is the fourth most diverse city in Canada, Speaker. One of our high schools has, of languages spoken at home, more than 100 different languages. We have a great multicultural council, a fantastic Carrousel of the Nations. We know what immigration is all about.

I was surprised, when I left city council, to read the statistics on the riding. In the ward I represented on city council, the language most spoken in the home was Polish. The new people coming in are coming from Poland, more so than France, Germany or Italy, which was the case in the past. In fact, the guy who was elected to replace me on Windsor city council, Irek Kusmierczyk, obviously is Polish, and his father was one of the founders of the Solidarity movement over there.

So we are changing; Ontario is changing. We have to reach out and embrace this cultural change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I gather that the member for Prince Edward–Hastings will reply.

Mr. Todd Smith: Always quick off the mark, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

Thanks to all those who provided comments in the Legislature here this afternoon. I, too, am the beneficiary of immigration. My wife is a black woman from Antigua, and I have two beautiful little girls, who have a wonderful colour about them as well.

I have spent so much time learning about all of the different multicultural communities that we have here in the GTA, especially over the last two and a half years, whether it was visiting a gurdwara in our Sikh community up in Brampton or visiting Vaisakhi or Diwali celebrations in the Punjabi community. We just had Thai Pongal in the Tamil community, and of course, we were this year able to celebrate, for the first time officially, Tamil Heritage Month in Ontario, as a result of a bill that I was able to pass with the help of all of the members of the Legislature unanimously back in March of last year. So the Tamil community in Ontario is ever grateful for the efforts of all of us.

But the bottom line in this debate is that while we still are seeing new Canadians coming to Ontario, immigrants

coming to Ontario, we are seeing fewer of them than we used to. According to a study prepared by TD Economics, Ontario lost approximately 18,000 people to inter-provincial migration in 2012. This is just a couple of years ago. Some 18,000 people who were here in Ontario decided that they were going to move to another province because they had a better opportunity to get a job, to get work, to raise their family. That was just a couple of years ago. That's three times the next highest province. A full 61% of those leaving Ontario for other provinces ended up in BC, Alberta or Saskatchewan. Why do you believe they were going there? It's because they had a better opportunity to get a job in those provinces that have their economic policies in place for growth, giving them the ability to raise the family and have the prosperity that they wanted when they came to Canada in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to rise in this House and speak on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, on behalf of the people I represent in London West. I first want to recognize my colleague the MPP for London—Fanshawe, who is not in the House today but was in the House earlier and has done some important work on this bill as the immigration critic for the NDP caucus. When she spoke to Bill 49, she did an exemplary job identifying some of the concerns that New Democrats have about this bill and some of the areas where we see room for improvement.

As provincial representatives for the city of London, the member for London—Fanshawe and I are both very much aware of the importance of immigration in building a strong local economy and ensuring a vibrant, diverse and inclusive city. We are also aware of the human costs of not adequately supporting immigrants once they arrive in our community.

The member from London—Fanshawe shared an email she had received from an internationally educated engineer who was frustrated and discouraged about not being able to enter his profession in London. In my comments on this legislation, when I spoke to it in the last Parliament, I also shared stories from constituents in London West, similar stories of internationally trained physicians who were losing hope about ever being able to practise the specialized skills they spent years training for. These constituents are at the point of leaving London, maybe even leaving Ontario. They are telling other professionals from their home countries not to come to Canada, telling them they will not be able to find work in their chosen profession. This is hardly the kind of positive word of mouth that is going to encourage more immigrants to come to Ontario.

It's heartening that MPPs are debating this bill. The bill makes a strong statement about the value of immigration to Ontario. It includes a commitment to francophone immigration. It specifically recognizes the importance of family and humanitarian commitments, and it recognizes municipalities and employers as important partners. All

of this is positive and encouraging, and as the MPP for London West, I can tell you that the fact we are talking about immigration is important to my community. It helps to support London's efforts to enhance our reputation as a welcoming community and to strengthen our capacity to provide settlement and integration services. These efforts are being led by an amazing collaboration between the city of London and the United Way in the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, or LIP. Many of you have LIPs in your communities. They are federally funded bodies established to enable local engagement in immigration settlement and integration. They support collaboration and coordination across sectors and community partners, many of which are provincially funded. They also lead a process of strategic planning at the local level. Evaluation of the LIP model is validating the success of this approach, demonstrating the value of engaging all stakeholders in local planning and implementation. It is also positioning the work that is being done by the London and Middlesex LIP as best practice across the province and even the country.

1710

Certainly we know as a province that we have to learn from best practice and do something to increase our share of immigrants to Ontario. Between 2001 and 2011, Ontario's proportion of immigrants declined from 60% to 40%, which is Ontario's lowest share of immigrants in at least 30 years. In particular, Ontario's share of economic immigrants has significantly declined, to the point where economic immigrants make up only half of all immigrants to Ontario, lower than any other province.

In my community of London, we have identified the attraction and retention of newcomers as a high priority. The 2011 national household survey showed that London lost as many immigrants as we gained. London is also less diverse than the rest of the province. Immigrants make up only 22% of our population compared to 29% across Ontario.

The makeup of our immigrant population is also quite different from the rest of Ontario. Our two largest ethnic groups are Spanish-speaking immigrants and Arabic-speaking immigrants. Many bring pre-arrival experiences of war or trauma, even those who do not arrive as refugees.

London is often a preferred secondary destination for immigrants after they have arrived in Toronto and is a primary destination for many refugees. But whether they are economic immigrants, refugees or family-sponsored immigrants, newcomers to London face significant barriers.

Last fall, London's Vital Signs report was released. It showed that the rate of unemployment among recent immigrants to London, those who had arrived within the last five years, was almost 20% in 2011 compared to 8.5% for non-immigrants. Half of all immigrant households live below the poverty line.

We know that immigration is critical to our economic and social well-being as a community and as a province, and we therefore have an obligation to make sure that the

services are there to welcome and support newcomers when they arrive. We need caring and compassionate services, culturally competent services, especially for refugees, those who are fleeing persecution from their home countries or have experienced war or trauma.

I'm proud of the work that is being done in London. For example, the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration is an organization that has garnered national attention for its culturally responsive and evidence-based programming. Like so many other agencies, however, the MRCSSI struggles for funding to stay afloat, despite the significant need it is meeting in our community.

I'm now going to turn to a summary of the main provisions of Bill 49 and then focus on some of the issues that are not addressed but must be taken into consideration as the province moves forward.

First, Bill 49 enshrines into law the province's authority to establish and govern settlement programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants and also gives the ministry the power to set targets for the number and types of immigrants to Ontario with selection criteria that meet provincial, economic and labour market needs.

This sounds like a major change. However, it is important to note that the federal government would have to approve any new programs and targets, and there is no guarantee this will happen. While Ontario has been able to attract some immigrants under the provincial nominee program, Ontario's share has historically been very small.

Second, the bill enables the minister to conduct research, organize education and training programs and appoint committees on immigration-related issues. This is a vital aspect of the bill because we need to understand what programs are working, how they are working and how we can improve.

Third, the bill allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters who are interested in participating in Ontario's selection programs. This employer registry is similar to that currently in place in Manitoba for those who hire migrant workers from overseas, and the recruiter registry aligns with the new protections that were passed earlier this session. A disappointing omission is that the bill does not require employment agencies and recruiters to register, which is something we would have liked to see, given the stories we've all heard about unscrupulous recruiters and the exploitation of foreign workers.

There is also a lack of clarity about the role of the federal government since employers must apply directly to the federal government to recruit migrant workers, and there is the omission of lawyers and consultants and anyone else who provides employment, guidance, advice, placement or any other kind of recruitment services for newcomers. These professionals are absent or excluded from the registry.

Fourth, the bill sets out a number of provisions related to process, new measures to monitor and detect possible contraventions of the act, new powers for the minister to

collect, use and disclose personal information and a new compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers, offences and penalties for both individuals and organizations. The bill also establishes regulatory authority in areas such as program administration, eligibility, compliance, internal review and the payment of fines.

Finally, the bill aligns requirements under the Regulated Health Professions Act with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act to improve the ability of internationally educated health professionals to enter their profession and to require timely decision-making, transparency of records and reasonable application fees.

As the NDP critic for training, colleges and universities, I now want to focus on some issues related to post-secondary education that are not identified in the bill but must be addressed as the federal government proceeds with its new Express Entry immigration process, which will definitely have an impact on how we do things in Ontario.

First, there is a concern that federal changes to immigration may make it more difficult for international students who have recently graduated from Canadian universities to qualify for permanent residence. Under the old system, international students with Canadian work experience were given priority status when they applied for permanent residence, and thousands of students have stayed in Canada and Ontario as a result.

Relatively open access to permanent residence has been a significant advantage for Ontario colleges and universities in their international student recruitment efforts. Many institutions have developed comprehensive infrastructure to support their international recruitment initiatives.

As of January of this year, however, the new system of Express Entry will place international students who have a degree or a diploma from a Canadian institution in a pool with all other skilled workers. There, they may be invited to apply for permanent residence if there is no Canadian qualified to do the job but will have to compete on points with skilled workers who may have many years of experience.

Currently, international students make up the majority of Ontario's 2,500 provincial nominee program spots. Under the new rules, they will still be able to apply for permanent residence through the provincial nominee program and are, therefore, likely to make up an even greater proportion of provincial nominee immigrants, given the competition they are going to face in the Express Entry pool.

The focus on economic class immigrants and the increased provincial nominee program targets that are included in Bill 49 thus shift responsibility for settlement service provision away from government and gives it over to employers and post-secondary institutions. Since employers and post-secondary institutions have not traditionally been involved in settlement service delivery and may have limited experience in ensuring appropriate

services, concerns have been raised about the quality of service provision. When immigrants are not effectively integrated into the local community, they may decide to move their families elsewhere, including to another province, which defeats one of the main purposes of the provincial nominee program.

This shift in the provision of settlement services also raises policy implications about funding and about the ability of employers and post-secondary institutions to deliver comprehensive settlement supports.

At the same time that we're seeing this shift, there are also calls from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce for colleges and universities to expand recruitment initiatives aimed at international students. The chamber is calling on the government to modify eligibility requirements and the provincial funding formula to allow international students and graduates to access all provincial newcomer settlement and labour market integration programs and ensure that adequate funding is provided to meet the increase in services.

1720

The second issue that's relevant to my critic portfolio concerns bridging programs for internationally educated professionals. These programs help internationally educated newcomers adjust to the Canadian context and address any gaps in the competencies or skills they require to practise in Ontario. These are often delivered in post-secondary institutions.

Just last month, the Fairness Commissioner issued her 2015 report and highlighted persistent problems that create barriers to internationally educated professionals entering practice. These include issues around the fairness of registration requirements, the quality of assessments, registration decisions and access to records. Some of these issues are going to be addressed in Bill 49. However, many of the issues she identifies will not.

Her report called on regulatory bodies to justify the necessity of all requirements for registration, including the requirement for Canadian work experience. This is often the biggest, most insurmountable barrier that an immigrant faces. In 2013, it was also found by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to be discriminatory. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has actually passed a policy that calls on regulators to remove the Canadian experience requirement except for very rare circumstances. The policy states that employers and regulatory bodies must ask about all of a job applicant's previous work and not where they got their experience.

The Fairness Commissioner's January report also includes some other recommendations; in particular, sustainable funding for bridging programs. The report points out that bridging programs are highly dependent on project funding from the Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Recognizing that fees to participate in these programs are often quite prohibitive, the ability of internationally educated professionals to participate can be limited. The commissioner encouraged the expansion of the Ontario Bridging Participant Assistance Program, or OBPA, to enable

more internationally educated professionals to access bridging. One example: It costs about \$12,000 for the internationally educated nursing program. OBPA provides only \$5,000 to help offset the bridging program tuition. So you can see that this would present a real barrier to an internationally educated nurse.

I also wanted to make a couple of additional comments about the bill, particularly in light of my role as NDP critic for women's issues. The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants pointed out that the programs that Ontario funds for settlement and integration are small; however, these programs form a critical component of the service continuum and provide opportunity to meet the needs of unserved and underserved groups. Women are clearly an underserved group in the settlement sector or in the immigrant-serving sector. Bill 49 is silent on the role of the community-based, non-profit immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, which we see as a concern.

Some of the agencies involved in the sector are doing some great work to apply a gender lens to the immigrant experience. We know that males are more likely than women to be economic-class immigrants, and female spouses are much more likely to be family-sponsored immigrants than male spouses. Sponsored individuals are highly vulnerable because of their uncertain legal status in Canada, which depends on having an ongoing positive relationship with their sponsor. If the relationship breaks down, sponsored women may feel that they are unable to leave their home. If they experience violence or abuse, the risks of reporting the violence are enormous because of fear of deportation.

There has been research conducted showing that sponsored women who have not obtained permanent residency status are systematically isolated and excluded from society. They are often home with their children, not eligible to participate in the formal labour market, have no access to language training or other settlement programming, and are not eligible for social assistance. So organizations at the community level, like OCASI, play a vital role in sensitizing settlement workers to the unique experiences of immigrant women.

In closing, Speaker, while we appreciate the intent of Bill 49 on this side of the House, we are also concerned that the legislation does not address some of the real and fundamental challenges facing newcomers to our province, some of the challenges I spoke of earlier. It does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional field and that they find employment that matches their experience and can earn incomes that are in line with those of other, similarly educated Ontarians.

It does not deal with settlement issues, such as housing, education, health care and a myriad of other issues. It does not address issues that affect non-economic-class immigrants—refugees and family-sponsored immigrants—including their ability to enter the labour force.

These are issues that did not just appear on the government's policy agenda this year, or last year, when the

bill was first introduced. These are issues that we have been hearing about for years and years in this province.

We are glad that the legislation has finally been brought forward. We are glad that we are talking about immigration in this place, because we recognize the importance of immigration to our shared economic and social prosperity. However, we are disappointed that the Liberal government did not act sooner to bring this forward. After more than a decade in office, it's time that immigration legislation is being discussed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand and respond to the very interesting comments from the member for London West on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act.

I think it's important to understand that Bill 49 isn't the be-all and end-all for everything to do with legislation. It's really the first step; it's the starting point.

I noticed that earlier in her remarks, the member from London West mentioned the change in Ontario's immigration history—a larger proportion going to other provinces; a different mix of immigrants coming here—and it's really to address some of those issues that Bill 49 is being discussed.

It's actually the necessary first step that Ontario needs to take if we're going to chart our own course when it comes to attracting skilled immigrants. We know that we need to get the skilled immigrants here to drive our economy, and that they're an absolutely essential part of our workforce. That's what this legislation is focused on: strengthening Ontario's role in immigrant selection and settlement.

If passed, it would put the necessary tools in place to help Ontario welcome the skilled immigrants it needs to meet future labour market needs. It would improve compliance and enforcement measures, and it would increase transparency and information sharing, to improve immigrant selection.

Speaker, immigrants are absolutely essential to our future economic health, so I'm very pleased that this piece of legislation is now being debated in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to get up to comment on the member from London West, on Bill 49. She makes some good points. This bill is long overdue. We're seeing our portion of immigration in this country declining from what used to be first place to being really far down the list, as far as immigrants, or new Canadians, coming to Ontario, looking for a better job.

If I go back in my own family history, I had a grandfather who went to the States, back at the end of the last century, and was called back when my great-grandfather passed away. In those days, the best jobs were not in the country. When my uncles were looking for work, they went to places in northern Ontario, because at that time we were mainly rural, with jobs in northern Ontario in the mines, because that became the place to go. Another

uncle went to the States because of the car industry in Detroit during the depression.

1730

But then there was a period of time when Ontario got booming. We were the place to be in Canada. Our manufacturing was second to none in this country, and actually second to none on this continent. Now we've seen that dry up. Jobs aren't here. Immigration, we see from the stats, is moving to places other than Ontario, because that's where they can get a job and that's where opportunity lies.

Of course, we're doing something to try to attract our fair share. Our numbers have been dropping. New Canadians are well-trained, smart people. They don't want to come to Ontario and not have a job, or be underemployed like we're seeing. They want a good-paying job, and unfortunately, under this government, they have to go elsewhere.

We want to see that come back. Maybe this is a first step, but it's about time they took that first step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand and offer some comments on the wonderful address by the member from London West. When she talked about the changing face of London, she talked about the Arabic community. In my last term on Windsor city council, we had three Arabic-speaking members of council, including the mayor.

Windsor is changing. We're in that border area where, in Dearborn, Michigan, I believe it's the highest Lebanese population outside of Beirut. People come where the jobs are. They bring their families, they open businesses, their young people get educated and their relatives go back and forth across the border. I think Windsor right now has some of the best Arabic restaurants in the entire province. It's amazing what's happening there.

If you want to talk about the new face of Ontario, you need to look no further than this chamber and the beautiful and handsome faces of our legislative pages. They're from all over Ontario, and they come from such a diverse cultural mix. These are the next members of provincial Parliament, the next members of cabinet. Perhaps there will even be a Premier coming out of these legislative pages' ranks. Ontario is changing, and I think it's overdue. It's a good thing. We can all benefit from new immigrants coming into our province.

The thing that troubles me more than anything, though, is that we have to do more to recognize the skills, educational backgrounds and professions that many of our new immigrants bring. In Windsor we used to talk about PhDs and MDs driving cabs at one time. We have to do more to enhance their cultural experience when they arrive in our communities.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to add my voice, as hoarse as it is, to the debate on this bill. It's an import-

ant piece of legislation, one that recognizes a very important fact: that immigrants have built this country.

My dad came over as a Scottish immigrant. He didn't have a particular set of skills, but he was a blue-collar type, a hard-working guy who provided for his family—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He probably voted for the NDP.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, he was a solid New Democrat. He brought me up well.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: But he evolved.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: But he evolved, yes.

But I want to go off on a post-secondary tangent for a bit. When I had the privilege of being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I was asked to lead a delegation to Winnipeg to meet with the 31 ministers of education from the various provinces in China. We talked a lot. It was about student success and retention.

One of the things that I discovered—I think the person from Beijing talked about their one million international students. We had some controversy, you remember, about 600. I said, “How do you do that? What’s the rationale?” He said, “Well, with full scholarships we attract one million international students, your best and your brightest. If we can convince 10% of them to stay, our history of having five times the new industrial patents in China as you have in all of North America will continue. Our economy will continue to grow and to thrive.” You know what? There are a lot of things I don’t like about the system there, but they’ve sure got the right approach to education, and it’s paying dividends.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. We return to the member for London West for her reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank the Minister of Education, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for their comments on my remarks.

A couple of things: Thank you to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for that lovely recognition of our pages and the important role they are going to play in moving this province forward.

In response to the comment that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh also made about recognizing the skills that newcomers bring to our community, I think that the example I raised of post-secondary bridging programs is really important. I have research here. The Ryerson internationally educated social work professionals bridging program reports that 90% of the graduates of that program are professionally employed within six months of graduation. So bridging programs work. They are a very effective way to help internationally educated newcomers bridge any gaps that they may have and to get to practise the career they were trained for.

But they are very difficult for many newcomers to access. There’s a lack of stability around the programs because institutions never know if they’re going to be able to offer them. Students can’t really afford to access them when there are very high tuition fees involved, and many of these internationally educated people are

working survival jobs during the day. They can’t afford not to work in order to go to a bridging program.

I think there is lots of opportunity for the government to introduce new measures on bridging programs, to introduce more financial supports for both students and institutions to participate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 49. I’ll be sharing my time with the Minister of Transportation and my colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, as well as my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying I am one of those immigrants who has been in Canada since 1970. Recently, I spoke in the House about the Wong Association of Ontario. I want to do a shout-out to them because my family tree is from the Wongs.

Remarks in Cantonese.

That means older Chinese have been here in Canada, and my family tree has been here for over 100, before Confederation. So I wanted to shout out to them.

I also wanted to remind and correct some of the information that was shared earlier. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings earlier talked about internationally trained doctors and what have you. I was at an event recently with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities at MaRS district. Merck, which is an international pharmaceutical company, was making an announcement on World Cancer Day. They publicly said the reason why they chose Ontario, Canada, to do that particular investment was because of Ontario’s investment in terms of medical science.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings said immigrants are going out west or further east. The data clearly shows they’re coming back to Ontario.

I was very pleased our colleague from the third party, from Timiskaming–Cochrane, talked about his own family tree with his colleague, his uncle Ernie. All of us have those stories, unless you’re First Nations, the first people in Ontario. All of us in this House are immigrants, and I’m very proud of our heritage.

With regard to Bill 49, if passed, the proposed legislation would position Ontario as a full partner in immigration with the federal government, giving Ontario a framework in which to design, deliver and manage a larger, more complex section of the program.

1740

I heard my colleague from London West talk about the bridging program. In my riding of Scarborough–Agin-court we have an organization called CPAC. They have done an outstanding job in terms of a bridging program supporting internationally trained accountants and financial advisers from overseas. That particular program is so successful that almost every participant who completed the program is employed. Recently, CPAC also had a partnership with the University of Toronto in terms of language training and support.

With regard to the bridging program that the member from London West talked about, to date our government has funded the bridging program, targeting more than 100 occupations and close to 50,000 highly skilled immigrants. Since 2003 we have invested more than \$240 million in terms of the bridging program. Of course, more needs to be done in this particular area because we all recognize or have heard stories where foreign-trained individuals are doing substandard work. We need to work with the sectors.

I know that my colleague opposite from Prince Edward–Hastings also talked about foreign-trained physicians and what happens when they come to Ontario. If the proposed Bill 49 is passed, it will then amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, the RHPA, to align requirements of the RHPA with those of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act related to timeliness in decision-making and access to records. These amendments were requested by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

As a former nurse, I know that there are many foreign-trained nurses overseas, and they look to this proposed legislation to help them to get recognition, training and credentials. At the end of the day, if these foreign-trained professionals are able to get the jobs here in Ontario that they were trained to do overseas—when they succeed, all of Ontario succeeds.

The other piece here is that we know that the registration practices need to be more transparent and more objective, and, more importantly, that decisions have to be timely. We've all heard complaints like, "When will the decision be made? How come they're not transparent?"

Speaker, because of the time, I'm going to let my colleague the Minister of Transportation carry on this discussion. Minister?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt for lending her voice to this debate this afternoon and very eloquently telling a little bit of her own personal story. As she mentioned at the very outset of her remarks, we will be sharing our time. There are two of our colleagues still to come: the member from Mississauga–Brampton South and the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

I've had the chance this afternoon to listen to some of the discussion and debate around Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, and I think it clearly demonstrates that the minister responsible for this legislation, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade—who serves in this place representing a community not far from my own—is, in fact, himself an immigrant to our country. I think, as I've listened to all of the debate this afternoon, it has become very clear that regardless of what side of the Legislature you serve on, whether you're a member of the NDP caucus or the Progressive Conservative caucus or, of course, the government caucus, there is a lot of content in this particular legislation that speaks

to the very best of what has made our province such a place of destination for so many decades.

Of course, many have lent their thoughts to this discussion and have talked about their own personal stories. I know I don't have a lot of time, but as I listen to some of the discussion it's not lost on me that I have the privilege of living in a province like Ontario because my parents and my grandparents made the decision to come here—my mother from Glasgow, Scotland, and my father, of course, from Italy, just south of Rome, both at the age of 20 coming from their respective home countries, my mother in 1961 and my father in 1958, meeting here and deciding to get married.

Interjection: Pier 21.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: My father did come through Pier 21. My mother didn't, but my father did. I had the opportunity to visit Pier 21, which stands as a monument and a testament to all that has made our country so extraordinary.

But I was thinking, as I listened to the debate, of my own grandfather, my paternal grandfather, someone who arrived here in Canada in 1951 from Italy, who worked as a construction labourer, as so many did from Italy and from parts of Europe throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and right up to the present day.

I think of my maternal grandparents as well and my father's grandmother. To imagine that not that many years later, their grandson—and many of his colleagues, again, on all three sides of this House—would be in a position to lend my voice very strongly in support of this particular legislation.

To think what their lives were like. The opportunities that were presented to them in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were, by comparison to what might have existed in their home countries, extraordinary opportunities. Of course, they managed to take advantage of those opportunities that this province and this country presented to them to do well for themselves, their kids and their grandkids, ultimately. But to imagine the circumstances in which they would have lived when they first came to this country, and to have witnessed within the last 40 or so years—to have seen, first of all, the debate that's taking place here this afternoon with respect to the legislation, but also to see what their grandkids might have gone on to work on I think would have been quite an extraordinary thing. If you told my grandfather in 1951 and throughout those early years as he was working in the sewers that were being built across in the city of Toronto, and in fact was significantly injured in the early 1950s in a cave-in—the best way to describe it is a cave-in in one of the sewers in downtown Toronto—and was injured for the rest of his life. Many years later his hip was replaced, but he always walked with a cane.

I tell that story just to say that if you could have told him in the early 1950s that his grandson would be able to stand in this place, representing a community as diverse and as vibrant as Vaughan, and to lend his voice in support of Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act so that for many generations to come beyond this time in this place,

we'd be in a position as a province to continue to do well by those who want to come from all corners of the world to help enrich this province and enrich this country and help us build this up—it's why it was heartening and encouraging to hear members from London, Windsor and other members of the official opposition caucus talk about the importance of getting this right, understanding that they want to see enhancements and improvements and that there might be a little bit of impatience, which I can understand, with respect to getting this bill through second reading and, ultimately, passed.

But it is certainly encouraging for this son and grandson of immigrants to this country from two outstanding home countries, Scotland and Italy, to witness that we are here, and over the next number of hours and days, that we will get this bill passed at second reading through to committee and brought back, I think, is an extraordinary undertaking on all of our parts.

I've been delighted to add my voice. I will now ask my colleague from Mississauga—Brampton South to provide her debate and her discussion. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 49 and to support Bill 49. My colleagues the Minister of Transportation and the member from Scarborough—Agincourt spoke very eloquently to this bill.

As we all know, Canada is a country of immigrants, and I'm one of those immigrants. I'm proud to stand in this Legislature as a first-generation Canadian. As the members of this Legislature are aware, Ontario's citizenship and immigration minister launched a strategy called *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy* and, in our 2013 budget, a fund so that Ontario's immigration system should respond to our province's demographic and economic realities.

Ontario and Mississauga—Brampton South have proud histories of welcoming newcomers to Canada. Immigration, at one time or another, was responsible for Ontario's character today. It continues to enrich our society by infusing our communities with talent, energy, vitality and culture.

It is important that we continue to do our best to serve immigrants in order that they can reach their best potential and give back to our society. This includes helping to ensure skilled labour finds its way into the professions for which immigrants trained in their home country and expect to work in in Canada. I feel that Bill 49's changes will achieve this.

1750

In considering Bill 49, I cannot help but reflect on my own experience. I arrived in Canada with two master's degrees and 10 years of experience as an educator. Like many immigrants, I faced several bad years for having my qualifications recognized. My story is not unique. It is similar to the experience of many families across Mississauga—Brampton South, Ontario and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I must admit that Ontario has come a long way since that time. We have much, much better programs since that time. The member from London West spoke about bridge training programs, and she was speaking in favour of those programs. I'm proud to say that it was our government who created those bridge training programs, as well as the Fairness Commissioner of Ontario, so that we can help those newcomers.

Many foreign-trained professionals these days do transition well into our workforce in their own professions. Having said that, I regularly also hear from many of my constituents that this government needs to do more. If passed, this Bill 49, which contains strategic measures for the Regulated Health Professions Act, should help to address this. It also pledges cooperation with our federal government, as immigration is a shared constitutional responsibility. This proposed legislation allows Ontario to chart its own course, one that will help Ontario to be at its best.

So I urge all members of this House to get this bill passed swiftly so that it can go to the committee and we can hear from stakeholders and the public, and it comes back with necessary amendments, passes third reading and becomes a law so that all the newcomers can benefit from this. I strongly believe that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa—Orléans has the floor.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Je suis fière de partager le débat avec mes collègues concernant le projet de loi 49.

Ontario has a long history of immigration. Immigrants have added to the cultural fabric of this province and nation. It is important that we help them continue to succeed in Ontario. That is why we have brought forth the Ontario Immigration Act.

I understand the challenges that newcomers to Ontario experience, because my husband and his family emigrated from El Salvador. My husband, his two brothers and his parents settled in Ontario in the late 1980s. They are extremely proud to call this province their home. But there were challenges in adapting to their new life here; for example, as simple as filing our income tax, navigating our very complex health care, job searching, registering the children to our school system.

That is why I am proud to stand today in support of the Ontario Immigration Act. Like my family, I want all who choose to come to Ontario to have the supports they need to succeed in this province. This bill, if passed, would give the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration the authority to establish and govern settlement and integration programs. This is a continuation of our strong commitment to newcomers to Ontario. In the 2013 Ontario budget, this government affirmed that "the Ontario immigration strategy responds to the province's demographic and economic realities. The province will be proactive in attracting the best and brightest in the world to Ontario, and helping immigrants and their families to settle and prosper."

For newcomers, adapting not only to a new life in a new country but also communicating in a new language is not easy. My husband came to Ontario, Canada, and learned not only English but French. I feel very proud today to say that he's fluent in English, in French and in Spanish. It did not come easy, and it did not come easy for his parents to learn a new language. That is why I'm proud to say that, since 2003, we have invested approximately \$460 million into language training. Not only are we helping immigrants to better communicate; we are helping them obtain the training needed to succeed in Ontario.

Je suis fière de notre investissement de plus de 240 millions de dollars dans plus de 300 programmes de formation relais, un programme qui a aidé plus de 50 000 nouveaux arrivants qualifiés à l'étranger à intégrer rapidement le marché du travail de l'Ontario. I am proud to stand and talk about this record.

There are many members of this House who are either grandchildren or children of immigrants, or even immigrants themselves, as we heard today. It is amazing to see that many in the House understand the realities inherent in being an immigrant.

I hope everyone here will support the bill. J'espère que tous et chacun vont appuyer ce projet de loi in order that we may continue to support those who want to call Ontario their home.

From a personal standpoint, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the struggle that my husband and his family encountered here, it gives me great pleasure to sit in this Legislature today and talk about the reality of our immigrants and all the right programs and the good programs that are supporting them. Certainly, we have a lot more to do, but this is a first step, as we heard. There is always better to do, and our government's commitment is there.

I look at our immigration law, and increasing our 5% francophone community right here—and we know that a lot of them come to Toronto. We want to add those services. We want to help them reach their full potential by giving them access to the right training so they can find the right job.

Encore une fois, c'est un immense plaisir pour moi d'adresser la Chambre sur ce sujet très personnel envers ma famille, qui a vécu—et je vis chaque jour dans ce sentiment qu'on a été privilégié, avec mon époux, de pouvoir apprendre les langues et de pouvoir s'adapter, mais il y a eu beaucoup de défis. Donc, I thank this government for their effort, and I ask everyone again in this House to support Bill 49.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup. Il est 6 h du soir. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing–	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
		Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Premier / Première ministre
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2482
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2483

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2483
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2483

Great Lakes protection

Mr. Bob Delaney	2483
Hon. Glen R. Murray	2484

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	2484
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2484

Correction of record

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2485
-------------------------------	------

Correction of record

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2485
-------------------------	------

Estimates

Hon. James J. Bradley	2485
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2485

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. Peter Tabuns	2485
------------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Schneiders

Mr. Michael Harris	2485
--------------------------	------

Curriculum

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2485
-------------------------	------

Community safety

Mr. Arthur Potts	2485
------------------------	------

Municipalities

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2486
----------------------------	------

Labour dispute

Mr. Peter Tabuns	2486
------------------------	------

**Community pancake breakfast / Déjeuner
communautaire**

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	2486
---------------------------------	------

Provincial curling championship

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2487
----------------------------	------

Rapid transit

Ms. Daiene Vernile	2487
--------------------------	------

Black History Month

Ms. Harinder Malhi	2487
--------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2488
----------------------------	------

Home care

Mr. Percy Hatfield	2488
--------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mr. Bob Delaney	2488
-----------------------	------

Winter road maintenance

Mr. Norm Miller	2489
-----------------------	------

Information technology services

Ms. Catherine Fife	2489
--------------------------	------

Health care

Mr. Bill Walker	2489
-----------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mme France Gélinas	2489
--------------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2489
----------------------------	------

Correctional facilities

Miss Monique Taylor	2490
---------------------------	------

Hunting

Mr. Jeff Yurek	2490
----------------------	------

First responders

Ms. Jennifer K. French	2490
------------------------------	------

Landfill

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2490
--------------------------	------

Dental care

Mme France Gélinas	2491
--------------------------	------

**Appointment of Information and Privacy
Commissioner**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2491
-------------------------------------	------

Appointment of Financial Accountability Officer

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2491
-------------------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Concurrence in supply

Mr. Randy Hillier	2491
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2492
Ms. Catherine Fife	2495
Mr. Norm Miller	2496
Ms. Catherine Fife	2497
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2497
Mr. Bill Walker	2498
Ms. Catherine Fife	2500
Mr. Norm Miller	2501

Ms. Catherine Fife	2502
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2502
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2502
Ms. Catherine Fife	2504
Mr. Yvan Baker	2504
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	2507
Mr. John Fraser	2509
Hon. Steven Del Duca	2509
Ms. Daiene Vernile	2510
Hon. Jeff Leal	2510
Ms. Catherine Fife	2511
Votes deferred	2511

**Ontario Immigration Act, 2015, Bill 49, Mr. Chan /
Loi de 2015 sur l'immigration en Ontario, projet
de loi 49, M. Chan**

Mr. Steve Clark	2512
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2512
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2512
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2513
Mr. Bob Delaney	2513
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2513
Mr. Steve Clark	2517
Mr. Todd Smith	2518
Mr. John Vanthof	2522
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2522
Mr. Toby Barrett	2523
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2523
Mr. Todd Smith	2523
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2524
Hon. Liz Sandals	2527
Mr. Jim McDonell	2527
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2527
Hon. Ted McMeekin	2527
Ms. Peggy Sattler	2528
Ms. Soo Wong	2528
Hon. Steven Del Duca	2529
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	2530
Mme Marie-France Lalonde	2530
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2531

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 2 March 2015 / Lundi 2 mars 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Bill Walker	2471
Hon. Jeff Leal	2471
Mr. Michael Harris	2471
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2471
Mr. Bob Delaney	2471
Mr. Robert Bailey	2471
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2471
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2471
Mr. Grant Crack	2471
Ms. Christine Elliott	2471
Ms. Catherine Fife	2471
Hon. Eric Hoskins	2471
Mme France Gélinas	2471
Hon. David Zimmer	2471
Ms. Christine Elliott	2471
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	2471
Mr. John Vanthof	2471
Mr. Toby Barrett	2471
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2471
Ernest Côté	
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2472
L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2472
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2472
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2473
M. Gilles Bisson	2474
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2474

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2474
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2474
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2475
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2475
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2475
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2476
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2476

By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2476
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2476
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Steve Clark	2477
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2477
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2477
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2477
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2477
Curriculum	
Ms. Soo Wong	2477
Hon. Liz Sandals	2478
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. John Yakabuski	2478
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2478
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2479
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2479
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	2479
Aerospace industry	
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2479
Hon. Brad Duguid	2479
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Norm Miller	2480
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2480
Liberal Party staff	
Ms. Catherine Fife	2480
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2480
Elder abuse	
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	2480
L'hon. Mario Sergio	2481
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2481
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2481
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Wayne Gates	2482
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2482
Youth employment	
Ms. Daiene Vernile	2482
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2482

Continued on inside back cover

CAZON
X1
-D23

Government
Publications



No. 51

N° 51

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 3 March 2015

Mardi 3 mars 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add actually a full hour of debate to Bill 45. Although Bill 45 was introduced on November 24, to be exact, this is the first occasion I have to do my lead. Just so you know, everybody relax; I will be taking the full 60 minutes.

You see, this bill contains previous bills of mine that I have been working on for a very, very long time. To be more precise, Bill 45 includes three schedules.

The first one is an act about healthy menu choices. Basically what this is all about is that it has to do with menu labelling. You will remember, Speaker—and I will go through the different iterations of that bill through time—that this is an issue that I have been pushing since 2009 that has now been picked up by this government and included in Bill 45.

The second schedule deals with amendments to the smoke-free act to ban flavoured tobacco. Here again, I have been working on trying to ban flavoured tobacco in Ontario since 2008. I'm quite happy to see that it's now receiving second reading under the government's Bill 45.

Schedule three talks about what is known as e-cigarettes, vaporizers or vapours, whichever one you want to call them, but basically to bring regulation to e-cigarettes.

I will be going through this bill in the order that the bill is written. Not that I care about menu labelling more than banning flavoured tobacco; all of those health pro-

motion issues are important to me. This is why I have been working on them for such a long time.

Ce matin, ça me fait plaisir de parler au sujet du projet de loi 45. Le projet de loi 45 contient vraiment trois parties.

La première partie, c'est de mettre les calories sur le menu. Comme ça, lorsque les gens iront, disons, à McDonald's, vous pourrez voir, « Big Mac : 3,99 \$ et 455 calories. »

La deuxième partie du projet de loi : on veut s'assurer qu'il n'y aura plus de tabac aromatisé en Ontario. C'est quelque chose sur quoi je travaille depuis très longtemps, et je vais vous raconter un peu de l'histoire de comment on en est venu à ça.

La troisième partie s'adresse aux cigarettes électroniques. En ce moment, il n'y a aucune loi ou règlement qui s'applique aux cigarettes électroniques, et je crois que, parce qu'elles gagnent en popularité, c'est le temps que le gouvernement s'en mêle et qu'on commence à mettre certains règlements. Je commence.

So let's start with menu labelling. It's always nice to see where this comes from. The statistics to encourage menu labelling are rather stark. Basically, things have changed. People used to cook at home. At home, we go to the grocery store. At the grocery store, when we buy food, pretty well every packaged food comes with nutritional information.

Ontarians are smart. They look at those labels and they make healthy choices. A lot of brands have changed their recipes. A lot of brands now advertise things like zero cholesterol or zero calories, and they will tell you right on the front of the package. But it doesn't matter what's on the front of the package, because on the back of every single prepackaged item that you buy in the grocery store, you get menu information—you get a lot of information. Given that more and more people eat in restaurants—we say that Ontarians right now consume one fifth of their food in restaurants—we think that the time has come to do the shift from the information you get on the back of packaged food, to bring it to the front of the menu.

When I first introduced this bill—it has been quite a while, Speaker; I will go through the history of it a little bit. I will always remember when I first introduced this bill, because I was sitting in this chamber, in that seat right there. The galleries were full. It was a Thursday afternoon. It tends to be quiet in here on a Thursday afternoon, but not that Thursday afternoon. That Thursday afternoon, I was sitting in this seat, and the gallery on the east side was packed with people from the restaurant associations who had come to lobby against the bill.

At the time I had introduced the bill for the first time, it was Bill 156. It was called the Healthy Decisions for

Healthy Eating Act. I introduced it on March 10, 2009, and that bill at the time required food premises with total gross annual revenue greater than \$5 million to disclose nutritional information for the food and drinks served, and to limit the amount of trans fats in restaurant food and drinks.

The bill was debated for second reading. Once it made it to second reading, this is when a rare thing happened, actually. After we had debated it, I could see that some people were very much in support of it and some people were very much against it. A free vote was held where—except for my party, where everybody voted in favour—from the Liberal and the Conservative sides, some people voted for and some people voted against. To my—

Interjection: Surprise?

M^{me} France Gélinas: To my surprise, it passed. It passed by the huge margin of three votes, but this is a democracy, and it passed. It passed second reading. It was the first time it had been introduced in this House; it was debated; there were pros and cons and it passed by three votes.

The people in the gallery—if looks could kill, I would be dead at this point, never to tell this story, because they were frankly not happy. They had all come with their little uniforms on, saying name brands of big chain restaurants on their jackets or t-shirts. We knew who they were, and we knew why they were here: They were here to oppose the bill. So I did what every good politician would do: After the bill had passed second reading, I met with the industry. I sat down with all of them: the beverage association, the restaurant association. I met with all of them who wanted to come and talk to me and tried to listen and tried to see what kind of compromise we could make. How could we move this forward?

0910

They were pushing very hard for what they called at the time nutrition information packaging. It became the Informed Dining program in 2011, but back then—because we're still in 2009, 2010—it was called the nutrition information program. That was a voluntary program where the restaurant industry—most of them had agreed that they would participate in this and that a bill forcing them to do things was not necessary because they were going to do this out of the industry working together. They were going to put that forward, and they showed it to me and how it was supposed to work and all of this, and it looked pretty convincing, like it would work. It had some good points to it.

But this is now 2015, Speaker. When was the last time that you saw right on the menu board the number of calories? It did not happen. Instead, what we got was—the restaurants did do their homework. They did calculate all of the nutritional information that is in their food. They standardized their portions. If you are a zealous person like myself, before you go to the restaurant you can go on their website, pre-order what you're going to feel like eating that night once you get there and check out everything that's going to be on that; or, I suppose, you could always flip it out in between your appetizer

and main course and check it out on your cellphone—not really that convenient.

Some have them on a—if you have a tray, sometimes it's at the bottom of the tray or you can flip your little placemat upside down and you'll get that information. Sometimes it's on the way to the bathroom. You will have those great big posters on the way to the bathroom giving you all of the nutritional information of the food that they offer. Sometimes it's on a free brochure.

Because I've been working on that bill for so much time, I now have a habit that whenever I go into a place where I know they should post the nutritional information, I ask for this brochure. I can tell you that it doesn't matter if I'm in Sudbury, if I'm in Toronto or if I'm anywhere in between, when you ask for this brochure, the charming little person at the cash looks at you like you're from Mars, then realizes that, "Oh, well, this lady is not going to go away, so I might as well start to look for the brochure." The entire underneath of the restaurant gets flipped upside down, and sometimes out of a dusty box comes this little brochure that they dust off and give to me, and then you can calculate your information.

This is not working, Speaker. You're getting what I'm getting at? This is not working, which is why I reintroduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act on May 8, 2012. The first time I introduced it, it passed second reading. After second reading, we had a majority Liberal government. They knew exactly what they were going to do with this: They were going to can it. They never called it to committee. Committee had lots of time to deal with it. The committee went on holiday, and the bill never moved forward.

But I don't give up easy, Speaker. I reintroduced it in May 8, 2012; same name but I had made some concessions. I had spoken with the industry and, by then, I had taken out the regulation that had to do with trans fats. I realized that it was something that was being worked on at the federal level. There were possibilities.

The second time, it basically looked like the first. It would require chain restaurants to display the number of calories in each item, make nutritional brochures available—remember, the dusting off—and indicate clearly which items have high and very high sodium.

By 2012, we're not talking about trans fats that much anymore because the industry convinced me that that was just too hard a step to take, but sodium was something that we could work on. So it was put in. In May 2012, I introduced it. The industry reacted but not so negatively, but I can tell you that it received a lot of support. Let me go through some of the people that supported it in a minute, as soon as I find my notes. The problem with having the same bill come over and over and over is that you end up with a lot of notes. I'm in this position where I have a lot of notes.

Okay, so the people that supported it continue to grow, and the shift started towards posting the calories and the sodium. I'm sure my list of people will pop out of my—oh, here it is. So, at this point, we have the Alberta Public Health Association that supported it, the Alberta Public Health Coalition for Chronic Disease Prevention, the Alliance

for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the medical director of the Bariatric Medical Institute, the Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, the Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses, the public health associations—Canadian and Ontario—the Canadian Stroke Network, the Canadian Women's Health Network and the Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses.

It goes on: The Canadian Diabetes Association and the Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association. We have Eldon Smith, who is a professor emeritus and the former chair of the Canadian Heart Health Strategy. We have the Canadian Orthopaedic Nurses Association, the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, Cancer Care Ontario, CancerCare Manitoba, the Childhood Obesity Foundation, la Coalition québécoise sur la problématique du poids, the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the DisAbled Women's Network and the Dietitians of Canada. We also have the chair in hypertension prevention and control, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and the Fitness Industry Council of Canada.

We have Hypertension Canada. We have a number of people from nutrition consulting. We have the Licensed Practical Nurses Association of BC, the Ontario Home Economics Association and the Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada; although they will come back when we talk about flavoured tobacco, they also support nutritional labelling. We have the Prevent Cancer Now Board. We have the Public Health Physicians of Canada. We have the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. We have the Sport Matters Group, a group from Ottawa. We have the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, and the list goes on and on.

I'm sure by now I'm making Hansard a little bit nervous, but not to worry; they're all written down, and I will share the list with them.

So the story goes: The first time, a little bit of support and a huge pushback. The second time, I had made some concessions with the industry, and they were still not thrilled—I won't lie—but they were starting to come to the realization that this is a done deal and they could work with us or face a hard time. More and more people were coming into the tent. More and more people had had a chance to look at the bill and look at other jurisdictions that have passed similar laws and what had happened.

One of the first ones that did that was New York state in 2008. Since 2008, if you go to McDonald's, Subway or Tim Hortons—because they have Tim Hortons even down there—you will see the same menu offerings that we have up here. The price sometimes is a little bit different, but the number of calories is exactly the same as what we can find, except that in the States they have it on the menu board. They have it directly on the menu. The exact same menu in Canada does not have that information.

0920

Just so that you know, most of those big chains change those menus boards about every four months. Through

the research we found a brand that only changed their menu board about every six months. But, basically, they have the information. They do this in other jurisdictions—the exact same menu, the exact same thing—all we're asking is for them to bring that information to Ontario.

So we're now in May 2008, I reintroduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act—menu labelling, number of calories, but we're also starting to talk about sodium, and I will explain that to you a little bit later. I reintroduced the bill also in 2012, but that time on October 2. What I had done is—in a few minutes, I will talk to you about the work I've done on flavoured tobacco—but, basically, on October 2, I decided, “Well, everybody in this House has talked about menu labelling, they've talked about flavoured tobacco enough,” and at the time, there were also regulations for tanning beds. So what I did was I put them all into one bill. I called the bill Healthy Decisions Made Easy, and it included three parts that had to do with health promotion: the regulation of tanning beds, menu labelling and flavoured tobacco.

Unfortunately, two days before I was to bring this to second reading—I had a horde of people ready to support the bill from all parts of the province, people coming down from up north and all of this—Mr. McGuinty prorogued. I never got to debate it. I felt like this was directed at me. He had prorogued because he didn't want my fabulous bill to go through. I'm told there were other reasons why he prorogued, maybe like a billion-dollar gas plant scandal, but to me, it was personal. It was because he didn't want my bill to go through.

Interjection: The bill went up in smoke.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My bill went up in smoke. That was it. It was gone. But I don't give up easy, Speaker. I don't give up easy.

Come April 29, 2013, I reintroduced the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act. At this point, the bill required chain restaurants to display the number of calories on each item, make nutritional brochures available and indicate clearly which items have high and very high sodium. At the time, it was the idea that if any items on the menu had more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium, they would get a double check mark, and if they had more than 750 milligrams of sodium, they would get a single check mark to indicate that it was high or very high in sodium. That was what I intended to do at the time.

It's rather interesting because if you look at what Health Canada currently defines as “high sodium,” they put it at 360 milligrams of sodium. The problem with this is—and this is very, very sad—that if I was to take Health Canada's definition of high sodium, it would become meaningless because every single item at, let's say, McDonald's, would be checkmarked. Here again—not to pick on McDonald's, but you are it this morning—if we go to 1,500 milligrams of sodium, only four items on the McDonald's menu would make it, and if we go to 750 milligrams of sodium, then we're close to 35 out of 300 offerings at McDonald's.

I'm telling you all of these boring numbers, because there is a lot of salt in the food that we consume in res-

taurants, so finding the right thing to do—by that time, in April 2013, I had gone with the high and very high sodium, putting those thresholds quite high—1,500 is very close to the daily limit, and you would have this in one item. Think about it: If you go to any fast food—I won't pick on McDonald's—and if a large amount of their food offerings have over your daily dosage, if you happen to order three or four food items, such as a burger and fries and something else—an apple pie—you will be eating a ton of salt. So this is what I did on April 29, 2013, and we prorogued yet again, so I'm not done.

I reintroduced it on November 25, 2014, and that time, I really looked at putting the number of calories next to the menu item but also putting on the number of milligrams of sodium. If you go on the Internet, you will be able to pull menus from jurisdictions in the States. The big chains have started to do this. It is feasible to put that on the menu without having a cluttered menu, and people do use this information.

The way we have it in Canada right now, one person out of 1,000—those are geeks like me, Speaker—uses the information the way we have it: on the website, on the menu board, on the poster as they go to the bathroom etc. The other 999 customers don't use that information, because it is not user-friendly.

If you put it right there on the menu board, one person out of two will use it to make an informed choice. On average, they will consume about 19% less calories and, as a bit of an added bonus for the restaurant industry, they tend to switch their choices. They still go just as much as they used to before. They just make different selections on the menu, and they tend to spend a little bit more. They spend a little bit more, make healthy choices and consume 19% less calories.

I think we're starting to head toward a win-win, where the restaurant industry has come to the realization that this information is valuable, that this information will help Ontarians make healthier choices, that it is feasible to put that information on the menu and menu board, and that it should be there.

Of course, Speaker, you will know that Bill 45, the way it is written now, talks about caloric labelling, but it does not include sodium. It does not include the amount of salt. I say that we have been working at this for long enough. People have had enough time to talk about it. It has been talked about in the press many, many times, to the point that, in the last survey that was done—it was a Canada-wide survey, not just here in Ontario—92% of Canadians, and that includes Ontarians, want to see that information. They want to see the number of calories on the menu, and they want to see the amount of sodium.

A 92% consensus on anything is quite extraordinary. We all know that in this day and age, some people would be offered paradise and would vote against it. That we have 92% of people in Canada, including Ontario, who want this to happen, I think, basically behooves us to do the right thing: to make sure, when we have an opportunity to go through clause-by-clause with Bill 45, when we have an opportunity to make changes to this bill, that not

only do we support what's in there for caloric labelling, but that we make sure we include sodium. Whether it is with a check mark for "high" or "very high"—I could live with this, but I think it would be way more preferable to simply put the amount of sodium.

Whether you use that information or not is up to you. But I can tell you, even if you never look at it and you just go and order the same thing you've always ordered because your kids like it and it's easy, it would still help you.

0930

What happens is that the people that do use that information—it basically motivates the industry to make recipe changes. If you go to a Subway restaurant and order the tuna melt, in Canada, the tuna melt clocks in at 1,825 calories. A sandwich usually is about 350 or 450 calories; you can do the math. This is a lot of calories for the tuna melt. They have changed their recipe in the States so that their preparation has less calories and less salt. Even if you never read it, even if you continue to eat the same thing you've always eaten, there's a good chance that restaurants will change their preparation. That will help all of us because they will offer the same items in a preparation that has less sodium as well as less calories in it.

Now I see that half of the time has gone by. An hour seems really long when you think about it, but when you're actually living it, it goes by quite fast. I have lots of menu items that I wanted to share with you to do a little kind of quiz, "Do you think that this has more calories than this other?" We may do the quiz at the end because I don't want to run out of time.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Is there a test at the end?

M^{me} France Gélinas: And, yes, there will be a test at the end to see if you choose wisely.

For now, what I will do is, I will talk to you about the second part of the bill, which has to do with banning flavoured tobacco. Let me change all of the notes that I have in front of me so that I can do that.

Flavoured tobacco: The story starts in 2008. In 2008, my very first private member's bill was to ban flavoured cigarillos. Those things were basically all over my riding. Every couple of weeks that would go by, the number of flavours of those cigarillos would continue to grow, and the number of young people smoking them would continue to grow.

The type of flavour that was being put forward, the packaging, the marketing, the colouring—all of this was squarely targeted at youth. The tobacco industry was smart enough to realize that cigarettes now come with quite a lot of baggage. They have those ugly pictures on the front, and they're associated with sickness and all of this. But the single-sale flavoured cigarillos didn't have any of this. They had no warning on them. They were a buck apiece. If a parent saw them in the backpack of their children, they would have no idea; they looked like lip gloss or a marker. They squarely looked like they fit into a kid's backpack, like that was where they belonged. And that was wrong.

My very first private member's bill was a co-sponsored bill. It was one of the first times that we were allowed to co-sponsor, and I co-sponsored it with the Speaker, Mr. Levac. To my delight, it passed. Not only did it pass second reading, but it passed third reading, it received royal assent, and it became law. Can you imagine, Speaker? I had only been elected to this Legislature for about a year; I got elected in 2007. That was my first private member's bill, which I debated for second reading in December 2008, and by the time I went home for Christmas in 2008, I was the proud owner of a new bill. I was beaming. I had done—my term was done.

I had come from 25 years in health care, in health promotion, and here I was able to make changes, and flavoured cigarillos were not going to be available anymore. The day was grand, and it lasted about a day. Because you see, Speaker, the bill gave the industry quite a few months to, in theory, get rid of their inventory. We didn't want to hurt the little mom-and-pop shop that had bought those things and, all of a sudden, were going to be out the money. So the royal assent gave a number of months for the industry before they had to cease making this product available.

Well, the industry was not going to sit idle during those months that we had given them to deal with their inventory. Before the ink was really dry on the last production of this bill, they had found a loophole. You see, Speaker, when we defined a flavoured cigarillo, we defined it by the number of grams. It's really a cigarette. It looks identical to a cigarette. I kept some of them. If you're interested, come and see me. They're in my fridge downstairs. They looked identical to a cigarette, except that they were flavoured and they smelled extremely good. I handled those products for a long time. It's really hard to handle those things and not smoke one up, let me tell you, but that's for another story.

When the industry saw that in the bill, all they did is put a milligram more tobacco in their products than what was in before. We had defined a cigarillo by the number of grams because we did not want to catch cigars, which were also flavoured, but they were not a way for kids to pick up cigarette smoking. I suppose some kids will go through this, but so far, at that time in 2008, cigars had never been targeted at youth. It was really the cigarillos, the little cigarettes sold individually with no warnings on them. They were targeting youth. They were targeting the next generation of smokers, and we wanted to get rid of them.

Well, by the time the bill came into effect, it was absolutely useless. They had added a milligram more tobacco into their products. They continued with the same packaging, the same price, the same marketing strategy and the same number of flavours, and I will tell you that the number of flavours increased dramatically.

They continue to hook, on average, 90,000 more young people who would start smoking using flavoured tobacco but then get addicted to the nicotine, and after a while they don't want to suck on something that tastes like a peach, a strawberry, a martini or anything like that. They

want the nicotine fix. They switch to cigarettes and they become the next generation of smokers, and we all know that 50% of them will die from it. Tobacco is the only product that, if used as directed, will kill 50% of its users. I'll let you do the math, Speaker. From 2008 to 2015, times 90,000 more young smokers: That's a lot of suffering in our future that could have all been avoided.

So, not to be undone, I said, "Let's learn from our mistakes. Let's make sure that the next time we ban flavoured tobacco there will be no loopholes; there will be no definitions. It will be very plain, very blunt and very simple: Ban flavoured tobacco. Full stop."

On April 4, 2011, I introduced the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, banning flavoured tobacco. The bill was to prohibit the sale and distribution of new tobacco products, smokeless tobacco and flavoured tobacco. So not only were we talking about flavoured tobacco, but in this it's smokeless—think about chews and every other tobacco product—and the banning of new tobacco products, because we know that the tobacco industry's ingenuity knows no boundaries. They are very creative and very ingenious to make sure that they continue to sell their products, because once they have a customer, the nicotine does the rest. The addiction does the rest. They know that they have a customer for life, until 50% of them die or go through really painful withdrawal to be able to quit this habit.

That was April 4, 2011. This bill also died on the order paper.

Not to be undone, I reintroduced it on April 17, 2012, under Bill 66, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, which prohibited flavoured tobacco, new tobacco products and smokeless tobacco. The bill was very well received. The number of people who were joining the chorus was bigger and bigger.

0940

I always remember that Freeze the Industry / Gèle l'industrie had done pens at the time, and the pens read: "Freeze the Industry is advocating for a tobacco moratorium—a ban on all new tobacco products not yet introduced in Canada and on alterations to all current products. We need a moratorium because the tobacco industry continues to develop new, innovative products that: evade and exploit new tobacco legislation designed to protect the health of young Canadians; recruit and retain youth and young adults, since 81% of current and former smokers begin smoking before the age of 18; appear to be less harmful than existing products when in reality they continue to contain the same dangerous ingredients."

Freeze the Industry is a group of young people like there are very few of them around. They are dedicated. They are informed. They are eloquent. They are taking on the tobacco industry.

To me, if there is ever going to be a group that will succeed in taking on the tobacco industry, it will be the youth of our province. I can say thank you, certainly, to the cancer society for their young advocates as well as to Freeze the Industry.

This is so good, Speaker, that I will tell you in French.

Depuis la fin des années 2008, 2009, et 2010, Gèle l'industrie a été très actif pour essayer de faire changer les choses. Ils ont fait ce petit stylo, et je vais vous dire ce qu'il dit : « Gèle l'industrie milite pour la création d'un moratoire sur le tabac—une interdiction portant sur tous les nouveaux produits du tabac qui n'ont pas encore été introduits au Canada et sur les modifications apportées à tous les produits actuels.

« Un moratoire est nécessaire car l'industrie du tabac continue de créer de nouveaux produits innovateurs qui :

« Échappent aux nouvelles lois sur le tabac ou en exploitent les failles, alors que ces lois visent à protéger la santé des jeunes Canadiens;

« Permettent d'attirer et de conserver des clients parmi les adolescents et les jeunes adultes, car 81% des fumeurs commencent la cigarette avant l'âge de 18 ans;

« Semblent moins dommageables pour la santé que les produits existants, alors qu'en fait ils contiennent les mêmes ingrédients nocifs. »

Ils ont un site Web qui s'appelle geleindustrie.com.

That's what they did back then. They will come back again in my story because, just like me, those young people don't give up easy.

In April 2012, I reintroduced the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act trying to ban flavoured tobacco, trying to make sure that no new tobacco products are introduced, as well as smokeless tobacco.

On October 2, 2012, I introduced Bill 126, Healthy Decisions Made Easy, which I talked about today. You will remember, Speaker, that it talked about menu labeling, about banning flavoured tobacco as well as about tanning beds—which will become law, so we don't have to worry about that anymore. This bill was reintroduced a number of times, including in the fall of 2014.

In the fall of 2014, young people from the cancer society came here to Queen's Park. It was really, really well done. A lot of them were dressed up as flavoured tobacco products. They were dressed up as a grape to show grape-flavoured tobacco or as a cherry because there is cherry tobacco etc. They had a tug-of-war right here on the front steps of Queen's Park. Quite a few of the MPPs came, and then we held a press conference. Again, it was giving a voice to young people who work with the cancer society and who see the damage that flavoured tobacco is doing to their peers and who see the number of young people who experiment with those tobacco products that are still available and still sold in single cigarillos, still at \$1. Although years have passed by, the price has not changed. Because they experimented, they became hooked on to cigarettes and are now tobacco smokers.

Today, for the launch of my lead, we had Freeze the Industry. Remember the people who gave the nifty pen with a message to all of us? Well, they did it again. Not only did they come and hold a rally in front of Queen's Park; every MPP will have on their desk this little envelope that says, "Thanks, Ontario." I won't use it as a prop—sorry, Speaker.

I know that most of you have already opened up your envelope, so I will share with you what it says. Basically, it says, "Thanks, Ontario." It's a pretty good message, if

you ask me. It goes on to say, "There are 2.75 million reasons you are making the right decision by passing Bill 45." It goes on to say, "FTI"—Freeze the Industry—"is a youth led campaign that raises awareness about how the tobacco industry makes their products appealing to young people. The tobacco industry creates products that are addictive. They target youth by adding flavours and they develop new innovative products which still cause illness and death. FTI wants a moratorium on tobacco products. The first step is a full ban on all flavoured tobacco products including menthol." I will come back to this in a minute. "To date Freeze the Industry has collected over 10,000 signatures in support of a complete flavour ban. You have the voice of youth in Ontario behind you!" And they're talking to us.

They go on with a few statistics:

—46% of young tobacco product users use flavoured products. Speaker, that's really close to one in two;

—73% of youth who use chew tobacco use flavoured products. Those are what in the bill is called smokeless tobacco; on the street, we call them chew;

—28% of young tobacco product users use menthol products. An estimated 57,300 Ontario youth used flavoured tobacco products in 2013 alone. You know what that means, Speaker? We know what that means. There are 2.75 million young people living in Ontario who will be protected by ensuring a full ban on flavoured tobacco is passed with Bill 45.

As an added little bonus, they gave us some mints. The irony is not lost on me. They gave us some mints—I'm not allowed to use that, eh? Sorry. They gave us some mints because of the link to menthol. You see, although the bill does include a ban on flavour, they give the tobacco industry years to ban menthol. I rode this bicycle before. I did give a couple of months to the tobacco industry to ban flavoured tobacco, and you all remember what happened. Remember their ingenuity? Remember their creativity? Remember what happened? Well, what happened is that they beat us to the punch. What happened is that the bill became null and void. Although it is on the books in Ontario, you can find flavoured tobacco everywhere. You can find flavoured cigarillos anywhere you go.

The youth that came this morning to demonstrate in front of Queen's Park, the youth that organized themselves so that we have this nice thank you on all of our desks, don't want this big lead time given to the tobacco industry. We will lose. They have way more resources than we have. They have, I would say, desperation on their side, because remember that almost one in four youth—more than one in four; some 28% of young tobacco products users—this is 28% of youth who smoke—smoke menthol. So to say that, "Oh, no, menthol is old people," people like me and my generation smoke menthol—sure, there are people my age who smoke menthol. But it is also a flavour that is being used more and more by our young people.

0950

The people who came to Queen's Park today fully understand that giving the industry years to comply with

the law basically means don't bother passing the law, because it's never going to see the light of day. It's going to go down the exact same path that we went down in 2008, when Ontario banned flavoured cigarillos. It will be a bill that does not reach its target.

I could go on and on, but I see that the time is flying by. Before I go on to e-cigarettes: Monsieur le Président, la partie du projet de loi 45 qui parle d'abolir le tabac aromatisé, c'est très bien. Ça fait des années que j'essaie de faire passer un projet de loi, et je suis bien heureuse que le gouvernement l'ait inclus dans son projet de loi 45 parce que ça va nous permettre d'arriver à la ligne d'arrivée, ou la ligne de fin, beaucoup plus vite.

Le gouvernement est le seul qui décide le projet de loi dont on parle, et si on n'en parle pas, le projet de loi meurt au feuillet. Donc, avec un projet de loi du gouvernement, le projet de loi va être capable d'avancer plus vite, et ça, c'est quelque chose de bien. Dans le projet de loi 45, il y a une partie qui dit qu'il n'y aura plus de tabac aromatisé en Ontario, et ça, c'est parfait. C'est quelque chose que les néo-démocrates et moi-même, on essaie de faire avancer ici depuis huit ans.

Par contre, lorsqu'on parle d'une saveur en particulier, lorsqu'on parle des cigarettes au menthol, là, ils veulent donner à l'industrie plusieurs années avant d'être contrainte par la loi d'arrêter de produire des cigarettes au menthol. Pour nous, ça, de donner à l'industrie autant de temps, c'est un piège dans lequel on est tombé en 2008, ce qui a fait que, vraiment, le projet de loi qui est passé—la loi qui existe en Ontario qui bannit les cigarillos aromatisés—est complètement inefficace parce qu'ils ont étudié la loi en profondeur. Ils ont trouvé une échappatoire dans la loi lorsqu'on avait défini ce que c'était qu'un cigarillo. Ils ont augmenté le nombre de milligrammes de tabac dans le cigarillo pour dire, « Bien, la loi définit le cigarillo à 9 grammes. Nous, on est à 9.01 grammes, donc on peut continuer à vendre nos cigarillos avec les mêmes stratégies, les mêmes saveurs et les mêmes emballages. » Tout est pareil.

Si on donne à l'industrie jusqu'à deux ans—quand j'ai pris le breffage avec le ministère de la Santé, c'est ce qu'on m'a dit. Il pourrait y avoir un délai de deux ans avant que cette partie-là de la loi ne soit mise en vigueur. Monsieur le Président, l'industrie va trouver une façon de continuer à vendre des cigarettes au menthol, et comme on a vu avec Gèle l'industrie, ça va vouloir dire que le projet de loi va devenir inefficace.

I will use the few minutes left to talk about e-cigarettes. This is the third schedule of the bill that talks about e-cigarettes. Basically, what the bill will do is regulate the sale, display, promotion and use of e-cigarettes in Ontario.

Section 2 bans the sale or supply of electronic cigarettes, or any component, to anyone under the age of 19. It will be very similar to tobacco. If a young person wants to buy e-cigarettes or their cartridges or any of the components, if they are over 19 but look like they're under 25, they will have to produce ID. The products will still be available, but they won't be available to young

people under the age of 19, and there will be laws for using false ID and that kind of stuff.

The bill will also prohibit e-cigarettes from being viewed or handled by customers before purchase and prohibit the promotion of e-cigarettes inside or outside any place where they are sold. The people who own the places where they're sold will be allowed to have basic information about e-cigarettes and their price, but people won't be able to handle them or taste them or do anything of the sort. There will be prohibition on the promotion or sale of e-cigarettes in any place of entertainment, and they will ban the use of e-cigarettes in hospitals, long-term-care homes, pharmacies and other places where you cannot buy e-cigarettes.

For some of you who have never seen e-cigarettes, they basically look very much like a cigarette. They tend to be a tiny wee bit bigger. If you have gone out to any bars or restaurants where young people gather, I guarantee that you have smelled them. I am old, Speaker, so I remember fully well when we used to go into a restaurant and everybody around me used to smoke. Then there were restaurants where half of the restaurant smoked and the other half didn't, which was, I guess, a step in the right direction, but it smelled like cigarettes in the whole restaurant; it didn't matter, basically, where the cigarettes were used.

It feels like déjà vu all over again, a kind of flashback that I don't like at all, because now when I walk into a restaurant in my riding or in Sudbury, it becomes quite obvious that a lot of young people are doing what I did when I was young: going into a restaurant and seeing people smoking. It sort of re-normalizes smoking, which I thought we had gotten rid of, and were quite happy to have gotten rid of. And here it was coming back and rearing its ugly head.

Some of them don't smell like cigarettes at all. Some of them smell like menthol; they don't smell like cigarettes. But some of them smell exactly the same as if they were smoking cigarettes. There are no regulations about them. Although selling cartridges that have nicotine is supposed to be illegal, there are plenty of cartridges containing nicotine that you can find anywhere. You don't have to go to Nickel Belt and Sudbury; you can just cross the street right here and you will be able to buy them. We all know what nicotine does: It is very addictive. Whether you use it in a vaporizer or in e-cigarettes or in a cigarillo, you smoke it and it does the same thing to your brain: It tells your brain, "I want this over and over and over again," and then the addiction starts.

I would say the body of evidence regarding e-cigarettes as a smoking aid is still in its infancy. So if we find that e-cigarettes used in a certain way can be used as a smoking cessation aid and is successful in doing this, there is room in the regulations to allow for that. But right now, the bill is using the precautionary principle, where you look at making sure that we don't let young people get access to it, and let's make sure that when adults start to use this product, they are better informed and the product is better regulated, so that if they say it does not contain nicotine, it doesn't.

Right now, you could have the exact same product—and that was one of the studies that kind of surprised me, because there are new studies coming out on this almost every day; I would say every week I read at least three or four new studies on e-cigarettes and vapour lounges and all of this. The claim that it helps people quit smoking is weak. But you can go buy the exact same cartridge of the same flavour and they do not contain the exact same ingredients, depending on the batch, depending on the day that you buy it. So are some of the ingredients in those cartridges damaging to our health? In some cartridges, yes; in some cartridges, a little bit less. But they have the same label, you bought them in the same place, and they said they were identical. But they are not, because those products are completely unregulated. You can buy them in pretty well any corner store down here in Toronto, and you can also order them through the Internet, through—I don't know—at least 50 different sites that will mail to Canada, if you want to buy some of those.

1000

I'm not doing promotion of it—far be it from me. All I'm saying is that it is a product that is becoming more and more common. Here, again, the marketing looks very much like what we used to see with the tobacco industry, where they focused on youth with all of the flavours.

It's time that these products be at least regulated. As we find out more, through regulations we could make exceptions for people who use them for medical reasons or people who use them to help quit smoking. But the body of evidence is not there.

Donc, je vais essayer de résumer en une minute ce que j'ai dit pendant une heure. Du côté des néo-démocrates, ça fait longtemps que l'on veut que ces différents projets de loi-là qui ont été réunis dans le projet de loi 45 deviennent réalité. La première partie du projet de loi parle de mettre les calories sur le menu ainsi qu'une indication pour le sodium. La deuxième partie, c'est de ne plus avoir de tabac aromatisé. La troisième partie est vis-à-vis des cigarettes électroniques.

There are three parts in Bill 45. The first part, menu labelling: New Democrats have been waiting for this for a long time; we're ready to go. But in 2015, calories is not enough. We have to put in sodium.

The second part of the bill, that has to do with banning flavour: the sooner, the better. Don't wait two years before you ban menthol. It has to be done at the same time as every other flavour.

The third part of the bill, about the e-cigarettes and the precautionary principle: Let's make sure that we do this right, if new science comes out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions? The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair there.

I'm pleased to rise today once again to speak to Bill 45 and respond to the comments by the member from Nickel Belt. I thank her for her advocacy.

There's no letter "I" in the word "team." Sometimes, many of us in this Legislature get carried away, thinking that these bills are ours. But really, what this is about is a team effort. This bill—or any bill, for that matter, in this Legislature—is about Ontarians and about what they need and their advocacy. So I'm really pleased to say that this bill, Bill 45, truly has been a team effort and would not have been possible without the advocacy of so many Ontarians, and some of them are here today.

I want to begin with the youth who are up there, who I had the pleasure of meeting this morning. Thank you so much. Thank you for the passion you bring. Thank you for the personal stories you shared as to why you are so committed to Bill 45 and to reducing smoking. It is your advocacy and it is your passion that give meaning to everything that we do here in this Legislature, so thank you.

Also, I know that here in the east gallery are some other members, including representatives of the Ontario Lung Association, Hamilton public health, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, KFL&A Public Health, the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, Toronto Public Health, Niagara Region public health and the Canadian Cancer Society. Thank you so much.

At its simplest, this bill is quite simple. It's about three things. It's about ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians don't start smoking. It's about ensuring that the next generation of Ontarians never start to vape. It's about giving the next generation of Ontarians the choices that many of us didn't have, growing up, which is to know how many calories there are when you order a doughnut or that cup of coffee. That's what this really is. It's about making sure we have a healthy Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand in this House to say that Bill 45 has the support of the PC caucus.

I also want to share a quote that we received from Mark Holland, executive director, Ontario Mission, Heart and Stroke Foundation: "The Heart and Stroke Foundation commends the government of Ontario's commitment to reducing obesity and smoking rates in the province. This legislation will protect our children and youth from the deadly effects of tobacco use and will help empower all Ontarians in making the healthy choice the easy choice when it comes to what we eat and feed our families."

I stand behind that as well, Speaker. But I want to share with you and the House and everyone here in the galleries that labelling menus and calorie counts are just one part of the solution in terms of obesity. We need a wholesome strategy to increase daily physical activity for school-aged children and to help our young people make wise decisions when it comes to eating. It's one thing to put a calorie count on a menu; it's another thing to enable our next generation to choose wisely when they're grocery shopping, and how to prepare food. I think, coming from the background I have, that we need to do better in terms of increasing awareness and educating people in terms of how to eat within season.

Those of you in the House know where I stand in terms of lung health. I just want to get a plug in here about healthy eating and physical activity. I have a pretty tight family. This past winter, a really bright light in our family fought and beat Kawasaki syndrome. The residual effect is he has an enlarged artery. For the rest of his life, he has to be dedicated—as his family already is—to physical activity and healthy eating. But he needs to learn how to prepare and eat healthy, as do we all in Ontario. I'm afraid we've gotten away from our gardens and how to prepare food properly, and I'd like to see it go farther in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It truly is a pleasure today to rise on behalf of the constituents of London–Fanshawe to be part of this debate on Bill 45, and to be part of the one-hour lead that our member from Nickel Belt has done. She is truly the exemplary example of a critic for the health portfolio. She is an advocate for health, and it's proven in the work and the history lesson that she gave us. Time and time again, she came to this Legislature on behalf of these groups and these people who have come here to advocate, to make sure that their concerns and issues—and, rightfully so—are brought to the attention of this government.

I want to thank everyone here who came out today to support this bill and who have brought their issues to France over the years. France has then articulated that to the government, and people worked together to pass this bill for the good of the health of all Ontarians. I want to say thank you, France, and I want to say thank you to the Lung Association and the Canadian Cancer Society.

A lot of things that the member from Nickel Belt had talked about really hit home for everyone. I specifically want to talk about flavoured cigarettes. When I was here in the Legislature maybe last year or the year before—I can't remember; it just seems like time has gone so quickly—they had a representative come from the Canadian Cancer Society to show us what flavoured cigarettes look like. They displayed them downstairs in the legislative dining room. I even took a picture of them. Really, Speaker, they look like candy.

Mr. Todd Smith: Candy?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, absolutely. Bar none, they look like candy.

I have received postcards from many constituents asking for this bill to pass so that we can have a safer environment for our youth, our next generation, to grow into and not promote that kind of habit that we don't want to have happen to our children. When you talk about statistics, when 50% of people die from smoking, that's unacceptable. I'm glad we're doing something about it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Good morning. I'm happy to rise and be given an opportunity to make a few comments on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2014.

I want to tell you, I sat here and listened to my colleague from Nickel Belt. She covered all aspects of the bill to do with cigarillos, e-cigarettes and menu choices. But, Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to sit in your chair and actually listen to the member speak on her private member's bill, which was supported by all parties on all sides. There was truly support by everyone in this chamber to make sure that the government is listening and will commit to bringing forward legislation in the future for all the issues she raised on cigarettes and menu choices etc. In fact, the Minister of Health actually commented on many of her bills, that it would be appropriate for the government to deal with legislation.

The member started out by talking a lot about why the government has not moved very quickly. I'd just like to remind the member—and I've been here as long as her; maybe a little bit longer—that when a private member brings a bill, most of the time it's done with very little research and stakeholder consultation. So the government and the Ministry of Health had to do all that work. The bill was ready to come forward, but then we had an election. So it's now coming forward a second time.

We all support this legislation. It's very good legislation, and I want to thank all the stakeholders who are here, who are supporting this. This is one of the reasons why governments move slowly sometimes: We have to consult all the people who are out there.

The one comment that she made about menthol cigarettes, or flavoured—I think the government is doing the right thing. You have to allow the industry and the distributors and everybody that is out there to make an adjustment. You cannot ban the stuff overnight. We have to be fair to everybody. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nickel Belt for her final comment.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I've been here since 2007. I come from 25 years in health care, the last 11 of them focused on health promotion as I worked in a community health centre. So when I came to Queen's Park, health promotion was something very important to me. You will see through my work that I brought quite a few bills that focused on health promotion, because it continues to be something that I truly believe in. The process has been long, a little bit drawn out, but it is happening now through a government bill, through Bill 45, that big pieces of what I have been pushing since I've been at Queen's Park will happen.

Of course, I did not do that alone. If you look at the menu labelling, I reached out to people who deal with the aftermath of people who don't eat healthily, whether you look at obesity or high blood pressure or cancer or all of the diseases that are directly related to eating. So I reached out to the people I knew—to doctors, to nurses, to universities, to people who deal with nutrition, the nutritionists' association—and built a bigger and bigger tent.

When it comes to banning flavoured tobacco, certainly the cancer society was there, the Lung Association was there. But I would say the people who made the differ-

ence were the youth themselves, because they saw the effect it was having on their peers. They saw how prevalent the use of flavoured tobacco was among their peers, and they were the ones who won the show. They are the ones who made the government do the right thing and include this in Bill 45, because of all the work that they have done. For everybody who has supported the effort as we brought more and more people into the tent, I want to say thank you. It was a long journey, but it's worth it. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt and all members who participated in this debate this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now almost 10:15, this Legislature stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be here at the assembly today. Today, my little girl, Victoria, and my husband, Joe Varner, are up from Ottawa. I wanted to welcome them. My daughter didn't want to come into the chamber—she'd rather watch cartoons up in the office—but I wanted to introduce her nonetheless.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to introduce the family of Ali Rizvi. Ali is our page captain today from Pickering–Scarborough East. His mother, Amara, his brother Hassan and his sister Jehan are sitting right here in the public gallery. Welcome. I hope you enjoy your day at Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to introduce three guests from Ontario's Great White North to the chamber. We have Harold Wilson from Thunder Bay, and Tannis Drysdale and Geoff Gillan from wonderful Fort Frances joining us today.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It being convention week over at PDAC, I was proud to walk the halls along with my good friend the MP from Nickel Belt, Mr. Claude Gravelle, who is the loyal member from the NDP federally. Welcome.

Ms. Soo Wong: Today's page captain is Andrew Liu. His mother, Esther Zhou, as well as her friend Sophie Lu are here visiting us from Scarborough–Agincourt. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Claire Kubelka from the great riding of Oxford. Claire is nine years old, and she has already helped in a municipal election. I think she has a future in politics.

Claire is accompanied by her aunt Margaret Smith, who is also the mother of former MPP Bruce Smith.

I want to welcome both of them to Queen's Park, and I hope they enjoy the day.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on behalf of the member for Mississauga South and page Natalie McLean, I'm

pleased to introduce Natalie's brother Thomas, who will be in the public gallery this morning. Please give him a welcome.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, as you well know, youth rallied in support of Bill 45 this morning. I'm pleased to welcome them yet again in the public gallery up there.

I'm also pleased to welcome to question period representatives from the Ontario Lung Association, Hamilton public health, Heart and Stroke Foundation, KFL&A Public Health, Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, Toronto Public Health, Niagara Region public health and the Canadian Cancer Society.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce four McMaster students who are studying political science: Sal Salamone, Karishma Sooknarine, Gabriel Adamo and Yasmeen Abdelkhalek.

Also, Dave Rosborough is my assistant in Hamilton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today in the Speaker's gallery, we have a delegation from Newfoundland and Labrador led by Premier Davis and Minister Dalley. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is for the Premier: Premier, the Greater Sudbury Police Service commit their members to four key values. Those four values are respect, integrity, commitment and honesty. Do you believe the members of the police services board, especially the chair, are above the same values of their police servicemen and women? Do you believe the board members like your friend Gerry Lougheed are above the law?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very hard on one hand to say that we have a deep respect for the police services board and then on the other hand question the capacity of the police services board to make decisions, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite knows full well that the police services boards act independently. They have responsibility for police services in their municipalities and I have a lot of confidence in their ability in Sudbury to do their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Premier, it's obvious that members of the Liberal Party do not hold themselves to the same standards. The Sudbury police commit to integrity by pledging, "We perform our duties with high ethical and moral standards." The service says, "Our actions demonstrate our respect for the community."

Gerry Lougheed has been recorded offering an apparent bribe on behalf of your party. Premier, how is he demonstrating integrity or respect for Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, the police services boards in this province have a very serious responsibility for the provi-

sion of adequate and effective services in their municipalities, and I have a lot of faith in their ability to do that, including in this instance. The member opposite knows that there is an investigation going on. He also knows that that investigation is going on outside of this Legislature and we're going to let that unfold with the authorities and we will continue to co-operate with them.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If he doesn't have the integrity to step down, you should step down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order, and I will keep track.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier, again: Premier, let me tell you what the police service says about honesty. They say they are "truthful, open and fair." About commitment, they say, "We are dedicated to serving the needs of our community." The nomination certainly was not truthful, open or fair. It is clear Gerry Loughheed does not live up to the values of the board.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Premier, do you believe Gerry Loughheed's actions were honest and in line with the values of the board?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I again remind the member opposite that there's a process in place when it comes to dealing with matters like this. There's a code of conduct in place that is enacted through the regulation and it's really up to the local police services board to determine whether they suspect a breach of the code of conduct. If so, they can refer the matter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission.

In fact, Speaker, I'm sure the member opposite knows that's exactly the process that is being followed now. The Sudbury police service has been in touch with the Ontario Civilian Police Commission and I'm sure OCPC is looking into the matter. That is the proper course, that is the process that's laid out, it's at arm's length from the government. We should respect that process.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier. Whether we're asking these questions outside or inside the Legislature, you have a responsibility to answer them.

These tapes don't lie. You obviously had not yet made the decision to appoint Mr. Thibeault on December 11 when you spoke to Mr. Olivier. Mr. Olivier said that he told you "he wanted 24 hours to think about it." If you had told him you were appointing Mr. Thibeault, there would be nothing to think about. There would be no nomination. Yet, Pat Sorbara called 24 hours later, on December 12, to tell Olivier that if he was to continue, he would put the Premier in a tough position to make a

decision about an appointment or to continue on with the nomination.

So again, the question: When exactly did you tell Mr. Olivier you were appointing another candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me say again—and the member opposite may not want to accept that there's an investigation going on outside of the House, but there is. I have said clearly, in direct answer to this question, that I had decided after my meeting with Glenn Thibeault at the end of November, that Glenn Thibeault was the best person for our role as a candidate in Sudbury. I had made that decision. I made that statement two Fridays ago. I've been very upfront about that, Mr. Speaker. But there is an investigation going on and it's going on outside of this House.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: And we continue to demand answers inside this House.

In the interest of government transparency, let's try this again. Mr. Olivier has told the police that on December 11, you asked him to step aside. You tell us in this chamber that on December 11, you told Andrew Olivier you were appointing a candidate. What you say in this chamber is not subject to perjury laws, but what Mr. Olivier says to the police absolutely is. So which version of this conversation is correct?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have worked very hard to make it clear that I take this matter very seriously. I made a statement two Fridays ago. I talked about the decision that I made about who the candidate was going to be in Sudbury. I was very clear about that, and I have said—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member from Lanark to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I believe I heard it.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said that we will work with the authorities, but that work is not going to go on inside this Legislature. The investigation is happening outside the Legislature, and we need to let it unfold there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Premier, what is clear is what Gerry Loughheed said. It's on tape. What is clear is what Mr. Olivier said. It's on tape.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader—second time.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: What is clear is what Pat Sorbara said. It's on tape. What is not clear is what you did, what you offered, what you guaranteed. What you say in this chamber is not subject to perjury laws.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The only thing that is not clear is what you said, what you offered, what you directed your staff to do. Is the real reason there are two different versions of this conversation because, in here, you're protected from perjury, and out there, Mr. Olivier isn't?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I remind the member opposite—in fact, all the members—there is an ongoing investigation. This is not the place or the venue to be engaging in an investigation. That is up to the independent authorities to look into the matter and make a determination. I think the only proper thing to do is let the authorities undertake an investigation and make the final determination.

In fact, I will say I agree with the member from Leeds–Grenville where he said to a briefing that there is an investigation going on, that government should not be interfering. He said, “Let it run its course.”

I agree, Speaker. The member from Leeds–Grenville is right: Let the investigation run its course.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When did the Premier decide to appoint her Sudbury candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have answered that question many times, and I actually have answered it this morning. I said quite clearly in my public statement that after I had met Glenn Thibeault at the end of November, I had decided that he was the best candidate for Sudbury for the Liberals. I think that that has been borne out. The people of Sudbury chose Glenn Thibeault as their representative at Queen's Park, and we're very pleased to have him.

As the leader of the third party knows, there is an investigation going on, but it's going on outside of this House. We will work with the authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I assume a letter was sent by the Premier, because the Liberal Party constitution says, “The leader shall communicate his or her intention to make such appointment as soon as possible, and in writing, to the nomination commissioner and to the president of the constituency association.”

On what date did the Premier write her letter to the nomination commissioner and the president of the constituency association?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, I say to the member opposite that I have made a clear statement in the public realm; I have said exactly what our

position is. I have said that we will continue to work with the authorities.

The fact is that the authorities will be asking questions of me; I will work with them. But that investigation and that process is going to happen outside of this Legislature, as it should.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's obvious the Premier has her version of the Liberal bribery scandal. The problem is that her story doesn't match anyone else's, and the Premier is refusing to answer the question, to provide any information that would back up her story at all.

When will the Premier provide some evidence that backs up her version of the story and makes it clear that Pat Sorbara's version is wrong, Gerry Loughheed's version is wrong, Glenn Thibeault's version is wrong, Andrew Olivier's version is wrong, the Sudbury Liberal riding association's version is wrong, the OPP's version is wrong and Elections Ontario's version is wrong?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, the investigation is happening outside of this House. But I know that the leader of the third party would like to rewrite a version of what happened in Sudbury, because the leader of the third party would very much like to have won that election, and she didn't. She'd like to rewrite history; it's not going to happen.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Deputy Premier says that she's bored with question period, and now the Premier doesn't want to answer any questions about the Sudbury bribery scandal.

This place belongs to Ontarians, and they deserve answers. It shouldn't take a police investigation to get answers to some very important questions. But the Premier seems to think that she's above the law and above our democracy. Does the Premier think that that sort of Liberal arrogance is acceptable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is suggesting that I don't have the stamina to answer her questions, she's absolutely wrong. I may not be running marathons these days, but I can answer your questions. I will answer them every single time they are posed to me, as many times as you choose to ask me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Premier said—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

This is my moment to remind all of us that we are racing to the top.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I could do without the interjection. And that goes for members on both sides, because I'm hearing the same amount of noise while she's putting the question.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Premier said there is an investigation outside this House or outside this Legislature a full 27 times, and she has said it yet again today a couple of times.

Ontarians shouldn't need the police to get simple answers to basic questions from the Premier, especially when the Premier keeps insisting that there was no wrongdoing.

Will the Premier show some respect to Ontarians and start answering important questions like: Who decided to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have a deep respect for the people of Ontario, and I have a deep respect for the policy issues that our government is grappling with. I have absolutely every desire to answer questions about government policy—any questions that are posed to me. And I will answer any questions that are asked of me. I have done that; I will continue to do that.

The answer to the question that the leader of the third party has posed is that there is an investigation happening outside of this House. I will continue to work with the authorities, as I expect everyone would.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Sudbury bribery scandal, and the way that this Premier is handling it, raises some really basic questions about this government—about her government. It raises questions about whether people can believe her government. It raises questions about how a government can end up with four concurrent police investigations into its actions. It raises basic questions about trust, about whose interests the Liberals are putting first in the work that they do.

Now, can the Premier answer a simple question and tell Ontarians who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their orders to offer a job to Andrew Olivier so that he would not run for the nomination in the Sudbury by-election?

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just because members shift where they're sitting during the day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —I have the floor—doesn't mean that it gives you the right to heckle any more or any less. You're not supposed to.

Premier, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said and I will say again that I take this matter very seriously. But when the premise of the question is something that I absolutely disagree with, it's important for me to be clear with the people of Ontario where we're at.

There's an investigation going on. At Elections Ontario, the Chief Electoral Officer has said clearly, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

So it's up to the prosecutors and the judges. It's up to that process to unfold as it should, as the Chief Electoral

Officer has said. That's why I continue to say that the investigation is happening outside of this House. It is not up to the leader of the third party to pass judgment. It is up to the authorities to undertake that investigation outside of this Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday I asked you some very simple and straightforward questions, yet after you left the House and you were admonished by a member of the media—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Mr. Steve Clark: —a member of your staff actually answered with the truth.

Premier, I'm going to ask you again, yes or no: Have you or your lawyers been asked by the OPP for a meeting to discuss the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said publicly that I was going to be meeting with the OPP. I've been asked for that meeting, but I don't know that it's been set up. I don't know the date. I've said that clearly and, as I said, I will continue to co-operate with the authorities in every way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Again, this is what we face with this government. We had a debate yesterday on concurrence in supply. There are so many questions this government refuses to answer. When it comes to the gas plants committee, they shut it down even knowing that emails had been deleted and hard drives had been wiped clean.

We in the opposition, on both sides, have asked repeatedly, over and over and over again, who knew what and who directed who to make these offers. Premier, are you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Mr. Steve Clark: —going to come clean with the OPP? Are you finally going to answer those questions that members of the opposition have asked? Who authorized these offers to be made to Andrew Olivier from your party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say again that I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was the right person to be our candidate in Sudbury. I made that decision at the end of November. I've made a public statement about that, and I will continue to work with the authorities on the investigation that's happening outside of this House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier is aware that she has the authority to appoint or revoke any appointment to a board or commission with

the stroke of a pen. Given that the appointments are done at the Premier's discretion, when will you file the paperwork to remove Gerry Lougheed from the police services board of Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I will repeat what I've said on numerous occasions in this House, and the member opposite, I am sure, knows about this process as well. The police services boards are responsible for local policing. They have both municipal and provincial appointees. The members of the boards are the ones who elect a chair, and they are all within the scope of a code of conduct. It's up to them to determine—if they suspect a breach of the code of conduct, then we have an independent body, the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, to make a determination whether a breach of the code of conduct has taken place. It is not up to the government to make that determination.

My understanding is—and I'm sure the member opposite knows—that the Sudbury police services board has reached out to the OCPCC.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again to the Premier: The Premier would know that she has the authority under the Legislation Act, 2006, section 76, which says they serve at your pleasure. Clearly, Gerry Lougheed's integrity is in question. Premier, by not using your power to remove Mr. Lougheed from the police services board, are you saying integrity does not matter to public appointees?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the work of the police services board is extremely important. The police services boards are created pursuant to the Police Services Act. They've been given some very specific responsibilities under the Police Services Act to ensure that there is adequate and effective policing within their jurisdiction. Their work is so important that we have a separate code of conduct that is enacted through regulation to ensure that proper conduct is met.

On top of that, to ensure that the code of conduct is always abided by, we have a separate, independent body, called the Ontario Civilian Police Commission, to oversee police services boards.

You can see, Speaker, that we have taken several steps to make sure that the process is always at arm's length from the government and that the local communities are in charge when it comes to local policing. As we know in this particular case, the police services board has referred the matter—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. It's about government policy. I understand that your ministry is responsible for providing oversight to Taron, an administrative authority that manages the Ontario New Home Warranties

Plan Act, to ensure that new homeowners are protected.

Every year in Etobicoke–Lakeshore, hundreds of new homes and condos are built, and people move into them. They often ask me for some advice about how Taron functions. Purchasing a new home is very significant, and it's one of those things that most Ontarians might only do once or twice in their lifetime. It's important to ensure that these homes are properly built. I know that problems with a new home can be a major source of stress for some homeowners. Your ministry has information available which can help them handle these problems without further anxiety.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, can you share with us your recommendations for Ontarians who have a concern with a new home they've purchased?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the hard-working member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for this important question.

It's certainly part of our ministry's mandate to ensure that consumers are well informed and protected under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act. We're periodically asked by Ontarians questions about Taron, and I'm always interested to hear the feedback.

The first step for a new home purchaser is to become well informed. Like any warranty program, consumers should be aware of the terms of the agreement and make sure to report any concerns within the time frame of the warranty coverage period.

Consumers are protected for one year for any unauthorized changes. They're protected for up to two years on electrical, plumbing, heating or water issues, and up to seven years on major structural defects like the failure of a load-bearing wall.

I encourage consumers to first seek a solution with their builders, but they should not hesitate to follow up with Taron if the issues are not properly addressed. My expectation is that Taron will continue to help Ontarians, and I look forward to continuing to work with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for all of his hard work for consumers and especially for new homeowners. Many people in Etobicoke–Lakeshore are really interested to hear about the progress Taron is making to support Ontarians when they purchase new homes.

I know the minister has worked closely with Taron to strengthen accountability and ensure consumer interests are protected. I'm very proud of our government for its ongoing focus on transparency and accountability. I know the Minister of Government and Consumer Services has approached his responsibilities with that in mind.

While Taron is an independent, not-for-profit organization, I understand the minister is working with its leadership to improve its consumer protection. Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain what steps are being taken that improve consumer protection by Taron?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I'm certainly happy to outline

ways in which we've worked with Taron to improve consumer protection.

I'd like to start by referencing the Taron builder registry, which was relaunched in December 2013 and tracks important information on builders across Ontario: where they have built homes; if their licences have been revoked or suspended; and how many claims have been filed against them. Within the next year, Taron will be adding additional information to the registry.

Taron has also doubled the warranty coverage from \$150,000 to \$300,000. They've made changes to the board, removing the majority of industry members so that there is truly a balance on the board. Speaker, these improvements are working. Data indicates that last year in over 365,000 homes under warranty, only 0.27% have had a site visit from Taron.

We're continuing to work to strengthen the DAA legislation. I look forward to making these improvements. While the opposition talks about consumer protection, we're acting on it.

1100

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Your pattern of behaviour with your Sudbury scandal is hauntingly familiar to that of the gas plant scandal. Both have several people named in the OPP warrants continuing to hold plum, well-paying government jobs or government appointments. Pat Sorbara is still in the Premier's office, but so is Beckie Codd-Downey, who admitted to deleting gas plant emails. Leon Korbee is still advising you, yet Laura Miller added his hard drive to the list to be deleted. We're still waiting for you to ask BC Premier Christy Clark to tell Laura Miller to come back and answer the OPP's questions.

Premier, do you plan on holding any of these people to account?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just say to the member opposite that he knows full well that there's an investigation going on outside of the House. He may have made decisions about what people did or what they didn't do, but in fact, there are authorities who are looking into this, and we will continue to work with those authorities. That will happen outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, to the Premier: It's hard to avoid those tapes and the deleted files which have been recovered. I know it's hard for you to acknowledge those.

But Premier, there's mounting evidence that the people of Ontario aren't satisfied with your handling of the Sudbury by-election scandal. As many as two thirds of Ontarians believe Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed should step down while the OPP investigate bribery allegations. Your blatant Liberal self-interest is putting you out of step with the democratic values we hold in this province and indeed in this country.

When will you stop protecting your Liberal insiders and start protecting the integrity of the office you hold?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If we want to talk about a democratic process, the by-election was a democratic process. The people of Sudbury made a decision. They made a decision in full knowledge of the situation. They chose the Liberal candidate, Glenn Thibeault, to be their representative at Queen's Park. I have full faith in the people of Sudbury and their ability to make a sound decision. We're very pleased to have the new member for Sudbury sitting with our government.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. When was the Premier contacted by the OPP to indicate that they wanted to speak to her about the bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we'll be working with the authorities. I've said clearly that I will be having a conversation with the OPP. I actually don't know the date of that. I know that is being arranged. As I've said quite clearly, I will continue to co-operate with the authorities on the investigation outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have two questions. I'm going to ask the first question again: When did the OPP contact the Premier to say that they wanted to meet with the Premier regarding the bribery scandal, that they wanted to interview her about that scandal? The second question is, when that meeting is set, will the Premier keep that meeting secret, or will the Premier tell Ontarians when that meeting will take place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that meeting is being set up. I don't know the date of it.

The investigation is happening outside of this Legislature. I will work with the authorities, and that is as it should be. We cannot undertake the investigation here in the Legislature, much as the third party would like to do that and much as the opposition would like to do that. It has to happen outside of the Legislature, and that's as it should be.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and concerns things that Ontarians care about: job creation and investment.

Just last week, Ford Canada announced an additional 400 jobs to their Oakville facility. This is where the global production of the new Ford Edge crossover SUV is set to launch. This facility will be one of the most sophisticated assembly plants in the world. This is great news for Oakville, Burlington, Halton region and, indeed, our province. As a matter of fact, many of the employees who work at the plant live in my riding.

This announcement builds on one made just a year and a half ago when our government, in partnership with

Ford Canada and the federal government, announced a \$700-million investment to upgrade the Oakville assembly plant. This partnership has secured more than 2,800 hundred jobs. My understanding is that this is not the only good news in the auto sector this week. Would the minister please update the House on some of the exciting investments and partnerships taking place in our province between our government and the auto sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, it is great to get another question on government policy, the second today. It's good to see the member standing up for a very important announcement made by Ford in Oakville, an announcement that certainly impacts her constituents, impacts constituents in Oakville and constituents throughout the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. And it's not the only good-news announcement that we've had this week.

Our government also announced, through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, that we're partnering with Toyota Boshoku Canada by investing \$1 million to expand its Elmira manufacturing facility. Through this investment, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to create and sustain 460 highly skilled jobs. This strategic investment further enhances Ontario's industry supply chain.

I know why the side opposite gets upset when we see all these great investments in auto, because if they were in power, Mr. Speaker, our auto industry would have left—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I would like to thank the minister for that update. This is great news not only for the sector but for the related advance manufacturing facilities located in Burlington that will benefit from these investments.

I know experts agree—whether it's CIBC, Toronto Dominion Bank, RBC, Bank of Montreal or the Conference Board of Canada—that Ontario is projected for economic growth in 2015 and is poised to lead the country. Indeed the Conference Board of Canada is forecasting that Ontario's economic growth will be at 2.9% this year, well above the national average of 1.9%.

Comparing this with last week's auto announcement, clearly our economic plan is working for Ontarians. Could the minister please share with the House further evidence of these kinds of investments and, clearly, the corresponding confidence in our economy that they represent?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll pick up where I left off. We remember that the party opposite, the PCs, said, "Let those plants close." Mr. Speaker, we did not let those plants close. In fact, we've seen \$4 billion in investment in those plants since November. We've seen investments in Alliston in Honda: \$857 million; Linamar in Guelph: almost half a billion dollars; Chrysler in Windsor: \$2 billion. Ford announced that the GT was going to be made in Markham, Ontario—the coolest car being built in North America today. GM—half a billion dollars—just made that announcement a few weeks ago. Then we

have the announcement by Ford of 400 jobs. Our auto sector is growing again. It's growing because of the investments and partnerships we made in spite of their policy, which would have been to abandon the sector. We're proud of that, Mr. Speaker, very proud of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier, about your bribery scandal in Sudbury.

Frankly, my constituents and I are appalled by your involvement, your deputy chief of staff's involvement and your top fundraiser's involvement in offering an inducement to last year's Liberal candidate so he would not run in the recent by-election. This is a new kind of scandal that sheds light on one of your backroom deals.

When the Chief Electoral Officer forwarded his investigation of this matter to the OPP, he said the charges, he suggests, are "unprecedented." "Unprecedented" means he has never seen such a breach of ethics under the Ontario Election Act.

Premier, are you aware of any other time that our Chief Electoral Officer forwarded his concerns to the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hope that when the member opposite's constituents are in touch with her she goes on to tell them that Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against me and against the member for Sudbury were baseless. I hope she goes on then to tell them that I have said repeatedly that we'll continue to co-operate fully with the authorities. Then I hope she quotes from the Chief Electoral Officer, who said, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

I hope that she gives her constituents the full story when they contact her. I'm sure she does.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, this is a serious situation. This is not like any other accusations. The Chief Electoral Officer says it's unprecedented. The OPP will most likely take his interpretation of the law when considering charges. Premier, why are you acting as if this is routine, like it's a normal process for every election? We all know this is an unprecedented situation.

Premier, you have not seen fit to ask either Sorbara or Lougheed to step down. To demonstrate your recognition of the seriousness of these unprecedented charges, what action are you prepared to take?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, I—

Mr. Bill Walker: "I'll delete all the names."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Delete your comments.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the member opposite, when her constituents contact her, lets them know that I have said repeatedly that I'm taking this matter very seriously, that I am working with the authorities and that I will continue to do so.

It's an investigation that is taking place; it's an investigation that's taking place outside of this Legislature, and I will continue to work with the authorities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. This morning, Toronto 2015 unveiled the competition medals for the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to do without the interjections.

Would the member put his question, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, good news: The first gold medal will be going to the Liberal government for outstanding achievement in synchronized scandals.

Let me focus on just one: the subversion of the electoral process in Sudbury. On what date and what time did the Premier communicate in writing her intention to appoint Glenn Thibeault as candidate for the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: This morning, I had the opportunity to join the finance minister for Canada, the mayor of Toronto, Chief LaForme from the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and many others—in fact, there were about 500 people at the Royal Ontario Museum—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order—second time.

Hon. Michael Coteau: —as we celebrated the unveiling of the new medals. The gold medal is actually from Ontario. It's mined in Ontario. It's in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mint, a Métis designer and many other people.

I think we should be so proud of the fact that we have the largest international sporting event in the history of this country taking place 18 Tuesdays from today. I'm very, very proud that it's coming, and we're very proud of our record as a government when it comes to the Pan Am Games.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Back to the Premier: Speaker, this is a very simple, direct question, and the Premier is not

answering. Premier, I'm afraid I'm going to have to award you another gold medal for verbal gymnastics. It's a shame you won't let me hand out any medals for accountability.

The question was: On what date and at what time did the Premier in fact appoint Glenn Thibeault as candidate for the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The medals that were unveiled today, for the first time in any international Olympic-associated games, were unveiled with Braille on them. I thought it was incredible. I know Minister Duguid is looking at the accessibility piece when it comes to Ontario. These games are going to be the most accessible games in the history of any games out there. I'm very proud of our record.

The member from Hamilton can joke and associate the Pan Am Games and make light of it, but we take these games very seriously. The accessibility piece is a serious part and we're very proud of our record here in Ontario.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, on Friday of last week, the Premier led an Ontario delegation, which included you, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, to the round table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, in Ottawa.

A national inquiry would provide a renewed focus on the underlying root causes. It would shed light on the severity of the issue and it would help point to potential solutions. That is why I was so proud when this House passed my motion unanimously to support the call by the National Aboriginal Organizations for a national inquiry on murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls.

The disproportionate violence against aboriginal women and girls is a national tragedy. We must work with our aboriginal brothers and sisters. Minister, will you please update the House on last week's round table?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I really want to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for her question and her activism on this issue, not just today but since she became a member of this Legislature. I thank her for that.

The round table was a step in the right direction. We are pleased the federal government did agree to work together on a pan-Canadian awareness campaign. However, there could have been a lot more action we could have agreed upon. Based on the discussions at the round table, we identified 10 specific things from the Ontario delegation we felt were important, action we can take right now to improve the situation facing aboriginal women and girls.

We are proposing a socio-economic plan for aboriginal women and girls, supported by leaders of Canada's provinces, territories and National Aboriginal Organizations to address the root cause of violence. We need to push ourselves very hard in the coming months, as the Premier has said, to hold everyone accountable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm glad that the Ontario government presented realistic measures to end the ongoing issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. We have to collaborate with our aboriginal sisters and brothers to develop long-term community-building initiatives—poverty reduction, employment opportunities, safety and policing, and public education, to name a few.

For the last six months, I've worked with the Native Women's Association of Canada's Faceless Dolls project in my community of Kingston and the Islands to highlight the plight of the nearly 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

My visits with aboriginal community elders to school classrooms and religious organizations were emotional experiences. In the absence of strong federal leadership, we must continue to lead the way in raising awareness of this grave issue.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What were some of the outcomes from the national round table this past Friday?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: The round table was a tremendous opportunity to hear from aboriginal organizations and the families of the missing and murdered indigenous women. With the presence of three ministers—myself, Minister MacCharles and Minister Naqvi—led by our Premier, Ontario had a very, very strong voice at that round table.

As the member from Kingston highlighted, we need awareness. That is the one consensus that all of the attendees at the round table agreed upon—a pan-Canadian prevention and awareness campaign. This will build on existing initiatives and focus on changing the perception and attitudes on this issue of missing indigenous women and girls.

Despite the comments by Federal Minister Leitch, this is not just a local issue of a local individual crime. It's a broader issue. It has to be dealt with in a broader concept, and the federal government can do much, much more on this issue.

1120

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Can the Premier tell us of a time in the history of the province where the government, including the Premier's own senior staff, has been under four separate OPP investigations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just say to the member opposite what I have said repeatedly. I've been clear about my position. I made a public statement, and I will work with the authorities. But the investigation is taking place outside of this House, by the authorities. It is not taking place in here, in the Legislature. I will continue to work with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, this is a clear lack of integrity and accountability. Political points should never trump doing what's right. Clearly, the government, with its four ongoing OPP investigations, believes differently.

Premier, will you take the first step to rebuilding trust and demand that those who created this mess step down from their public duties?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I've been clear. I've been clear about exactly what my position is. I've made that statement publicly, and I know the member opposite can access that. It's in the public realm. I made the statement to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The deputy House leader is warned.

Please finish, Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just to say, Mr. Speaker, that I take it very seriously. I will work with the authorities outside of this House, where the investigation is taking place.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Did the Premier abide by her own party's constitution and send a letter to the constituency association and the nomination president as soon as she made her decision to appoint Glenn Thibeault?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've been giving serious consideration and listening very carefully to all of the questions. In most cases, the members have been able to pull everything back to government policy.

That's getting dangerously close to having no contact. I'm going to advise the member to make his question adhere to pulling it into government policy. Carry on.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have said repeatedly this morning, there are questions that will be asked as part of an investigation. That investigation is taking place outside of this House; it is being undertaken by authorities. I will work with the authorities outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, Premier, we, too, are anxious for the criminal trial to start. However, it doesn't preclude you from actually answering some very basic questions.

Speaker, if the Premier sent a letter that would back up her version of the story, why is she refusing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Order, please. I know I'm on the right track when I get accused by one side of not asking these people to be quiet, and then, on this side, asking these people to be quiet, when they themselves make noise while they're answering. I will do my best in this chair, and I don't need the armchairs.

Please finish.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If the Premier sent a letter that would back up her version of the story, why is she refusing to release it? Is it because it actually doesn't exist?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are many, many differences between the NDP and the Ontario Liberal Party—many, many differences. One of those is that we have a very clear process whereby the leader of the party is entitled to exercise her right to appoint candidates.

In stark contrast, the NDP chooses to use other tactics when they have a preferred candidate. They do not have that clarity that we have in the Ontario Liberal Party, which is why we have seen the disgraceful contact in Scarborough—Guildwood, where long-time members of the New Democratic Party have been forced to leave the party because their wishes have been trampled on by the leader of the NDP. I do believe that Amarjeet Kaur Chhabra—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you; that's time. New question.

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that parents and youth in Ottawa-Orléans have been advocating for this bill, and I'm proud that this morning we're joined by a group of passionate Ontario youth who are here to support swift passage of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

As a part of this proposed legislation, our government is taking strong action to protect youth from the dangers of tobacco. We know that flavoured tobacco products are designed to appeal to youth. We know from research that almost half of the 121,600 Ontario youths in grades 9 to 12 who have reported using tobacco products in the last 30 days have turned to flavoured tobacco.

The facts are here. Speaker, could the minister please remind the House of what we are proposing to do to protect our children from flavoured tobacco?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to begin by thanking the member from Ottawa-Orléans for this really important question. Speaker, to tell you the truth, I was hoping that this question would have come from the member from Nickel Belt, who spent considerable time earlier this morning talking about how important this bill is to her. Alas, it's not important enough for question period, but there's still some time, and perhaps she will ask the question.

But I do thank the member for her question, and yes, she is right. Earlier this morning, Speaker, as you know, I was pleased to meet with some of these dedicated young advocates. They offered advice and, more importantly, their support to get this bill passed. I'm delighted to see so many young people who share our commitment to drive down smoking rates.

As we know, the research shows that flavoured tobacco is a gateway for young people to become regular

smokers. With flavours like strawberry, watermelon and bubble gum, there is no question that tobacco companies are targeting young people with this marketing. This bill is all about making sure that next generation of smokers doesn't begin to smoke.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Again, my question is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as you know, e-cigarette use is an emerging trend in Ontario, including among our youth. We have seen a great deal of concern raised by local and international media and the medical community about the possible health effects and hazards of e-cigarette use.

In a recent national survey, it was found that 20% of youth aged 15 to 19 had tried e-cigarettes. That means 417,000 teenagers in that age group have tried e-cigarettes.

It is important that our government safeguards youth from an unregulated device that could have negative effects on their health. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please remind the House of what action she is taking to protect our youth from the possible health effects of e-cigarettes?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thanks again to the member for that very important question. Indeed, e-cigarettes are new technology, and it's the Wild West, frankly, when it comes to where you can vape and who can purchase e-cigarettes.

That is why we have proposed legislation that would, if passed, ban retailers from selling e-cigarettes to youth and restrict vaping in public places. In this way, we are proposing to protect young Ontarians from any harm that may be associated with electronic cigarettes.

The young people today sent us a message very clearly: They want us to help protect them and to make sure that the next generation of vapers doesn't get started.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier.

Premier, you continue to put partisanship over partnership, ideology over evidence. The evidence from independent officers indicates that there has been a contravention of the law. The members of the opposition side of this House have written to the OPP and to the Chief Electoral Officer supporting their investigations. Premier, when will you demonstrate the integrity expected of your office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I think the Premier is showing exactly the respect and integrity that the independent process should have by not interfering in that process. The members opposite continue to insist that somehow the Premier should intervene in the process and come up with some sort of an outcome that they would prefer. Speaker, I think we all know that's not how the system works. It's arm's-length. It's separate from the government. Those systems have been put in place for a reason. We should respect that.

Like I said, again, I agreed with the member from Leeds–Grenville when he said on Friday at the briefing that there's a process that's going on. The government should not interfere in that process. He said, "Let it run its course." He's absolutely right. We should let the process continue as it is designed to be and respect the outcome. This is not the place to try a case or undertake an investigation because that's the responsibility of the police and our judges, and we respect them 100%.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again, back to the Premier: This is a bit like Groundhog Day. You are allowed to give answers in this House to the question.

Premier, you have said that anything that "was offered in exchange for any action is false." "Anything" may be defined by you as a written contract, but the law says otherwise. No matter what the title, no matter what their authority, your staff did your bidding by offering a position to Andrew Olivier.

Premier, how much longer will you defy the integrity of—your office?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Sir, with all due respect, the role of the government is to make sure that we respect the law and let the independent authorities do their work. By asking to interfere in the matter, you're advising the government to do the contrary.

I would advise that we follow the process: that we let the police do their work, that we let Elections Ontario do its work and that we let the prosecutors do their work. That's how the process is done; that's how the process works well.

Let's focus on issues that are important to Ontarians, like building public infrastructure, like making sure that we are guaranteeing retirement income security for Ontarians. That is the mandate that they have given to this Legislature. That is the mandate they've given to this government. We're going to remain focused on those important issues and make sure that the retirement security and the good infrastructure that are so necessary for this province are there for generations to come.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you keep on insisting that you decided to appoint Mr. Thibeault in November of last year. Your constitution clearly says that you have to send a letter in order to do that officially through the Liberal Party mechanism.

The question we're asking you is, when did you send that letter to both the Liberal Party and to the riding association president informing them of the decision that you were going to appoint your candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I remind the member opposite again, as he is well aware, that there is an independent process that is ongoing. It's up to that process to determine the answers to all these questions and make a judgment.

We know Elections Ontario has clearly said that the Elections Ontario officer is not making any judgment. He's leaving it up to the prosecutors to decide, so the matter has been referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. They will undertake their due diligence as required by law and make a determination. Then we will respect that. I don't think this is a place to get into all the work which is very much within their purview.

I urge all the members to refocus on issues that are important, issues that our constituents are speaking to us about every single day, such as retirement income security.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is again to the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly said that she decided she was going to appoint her candidate back in November. There is a process under the Liberal constitution that says that she has to send a letter to the riding association president and to the election commissioner of the Liberal Party.

Premier, my question to you is, when did you send that letter to both the riding association president and the Liberal Party? When did you send that letter?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think we all see what the third party is doing. They're trying to distract from their sordid record on progressive policies that have been implemented by this government in this process.

When it comes to putting forward the most progressive budget ever in the history of this province, under the leadership of our Premier, where was the third party? They forced an unnecessary election. What was the result of that election? There was a Liberal majority government re-elected in this House. They still have not forgiven themselves for making that wrong-headed decision, and they continued on to vote against one of the most progressive budgets.

That is why they want to talk about everything else. They don't want to talk about affordable housing, which we're investing in. They don't want to talk about raising minimum wage and indexing it to the cost of living, which this government brought in and they disagreed with. They don't want to talk about the support of the governmental sector in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

GREENBELT

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, this past Friday, you and I celebrated the 10th anniversary of Ontario's greenbelt. This milestone provides an opportunity to reflect on the role the greenbelt plays in protecting Ontario's most valuable agricultural and environmentally sensitive land.

Ten years ago, our government sent a powerful message by creating the Greenbelt Plan, which designates the Oak Ridges moraine, the Niagara Escarpment and much

of our cherished countryside as protected from development. Our government told all Ontarians that we must not take Ontario's natural beauty and important farmland for granted.

Minister, as we celebrate this important anniversary of the greenbelt, please remind us of why we can be proud of this Prince-class model of land preservation.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm proud to be able to get up to declare why we're proud about the greenbelt, the largest greenbelt in the world, by the way, larger than the size of Prince Edward Island. Protecting farmland, protecting wetlands, coordinating growth—it is part of a comprehensive plan that our government has set out over the last decade, and I think it's great to be able to say, "Happy Anniversary, Greenbelt."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Minister. I understand that, as part of your mandate as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Premier has directed you to lead a review of the Greenbelt Plan in coordination with reviews of the growth plan, the Oak Ridges moraine plan and the Niagara Escarpment Plan.

Minister, these reviews are an exciting opportunity to build on the plans' successes to date and to identify opportunities to improve the plans where needed. You are required to consult with each municipality that has jurisdiction in the greenbelt and to ensure that the public is given an opportunity to provide input.

Minister, what details can you share about these coordinated reviews?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member from Durham for his question and his wonderful supplementary. We announced on Friday the establishment of a panel, set up by the Honourable David Crombie, by the way, who will be heading that; "an inspired choice," according to the Caledon Enterprise. We'll be working with the Ministry of Natural Resources, holding meetings across the province to review the four plans. It will be comprehensive, it will be coordinated, and in the words of David Crombie, it will be a historic undertaking of monumental importance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to note that everybody got a little thank-you note this morning to thank them for supporting Freeze the Industry, a group of youth who want to support Bill 45. There are mints in there, so remember menthol.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's actually not a point of order, but thank you.

DEFERRED VOTES

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have deferred votes on the motions of concurrence in supply in the following ministries and offices: tourism, culture and

sport; infrastructure; transportation; community and social services; energy; finance; health and long-term care; aboriginal affairs; francophone affairs; and consumer services.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoun, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kiwal, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Horwath, Andrea	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	McDonnell, Jim	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Infrastructure.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Transportation. All those in favour—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Energy. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Madame Meilleur has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Finance. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Agreed. Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. All those in favour—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Agreed. Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. All those in favour—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote. Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply of the Office of Francophone Affairs. All those in favour, please rise—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote. Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Flynn has moved concurrence in supply of the Ministry of Consumer Services.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote. Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 58; the nays are 42.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motions agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Jim McDonell: Although the final recommendations of the Jeffrey Baldwin inquiry were released a year ago, the government had identified the need for a new information management system for all children's aid societies years ago. They began searching for vendors in 2010 and eventually partnered with Deloitte and US-based eSystems in November 2012 in order to build the Child Protection Information Network, or CPIN.

The Baldwin inquiry recommended a February 2016 deadline for full implementation of CPIN across all CASs in Ontario. The government has admitted that it will not meet this deadline. Currently, there are only three CASs running CPIN and the two largest—Toronto and Toronto Catholic CASs—have experienced setbacks and may not be operational by the end-of-March deadline. Meanwhile, many CASs in urban and rural areas will not be able to work with the confidence and efficiency a solid information management system would provide.

This wasn't a two-year deadline. The project had been in the works for five years already and the government expects it to take at least five years more.

At the missing and murdered aboriginal women's round table in Ottawa on Friday, Premier Wynne spoke of the importance of information-sharing, benchmarks and accountability. We take her at her word. However, CPIN won't be finished for another six years, and only one in five CAS workers will be using it by the original stated deadline. This is a very low benchmark, and no Premier should consider this a success.

LEADING WOMEN, LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to be here today to extend my congratulations to six women in my riding of Welland who will be receiving Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Communities recognition program awards. Since 2006, 400 women province-wide have been honoured for their leadership contributions to their communities. This year, six winners have been selected from my native Welland.

The two who will receive the Leading Girls award are high school students, Vritti Patel and Melissa Walls, and the four who will receive the Leading Women award are Betty Ann Baker, Huguette Brauweiler, Karen Gillespie and Bridgette Ridley.

To celebrate the award winners, I'll be hosting a celebration event in Welland on March 6—this Friday—at Holy Trinity church at 3 p.m.

These remarkable community leaders have all come from diverse backgrounds, and despite the various barriers that they have faced in different courses in their lives, they've demonstrated a commitment to community-building by promoting diversity, individuality and gender equality. These awards acknowledge the important role that these six women have played in shaping their communities over the years. Whether a high school student or a senior, each one of them is an example of leadership and commitment.

These extraordinary women have demonstrated leadership in fostering positive changes in my community, and they will be role models, mentors and shining examples of contributions that one person can make to build a stronger community.

MODEL PARLIAMENT

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today and bring attention to some special VIPs who joined us at Queen's Park last week. From Wednesday to Friday, 107 students from across the province, each representing a riding in Ontario, took part in the model Parliament program. It's a unique and innovative program designed for students in grades 10 to 12 who are interested in civil service and current events. It's about introducing our democratic process to our young people in a real and engaging way. It was a great opportunity to bring together young, bright, motivated students and give them a chance to understand how government works, firsthand.

Mr. Speaker, I can't continue without mentioning how proud I was that not only did we have two representatives from Halton, but that one of them was my daughter, Oriana. It was a wonderful experience and she was incredibly proud and honoured to have been selected to participate.

As part of the program, the students were given tours of Queen's Park and participated in workshops and presentations about the history of the provincial Legislature

and the legislative process. They also had the chance to meet directly with a number of MPPs to find out what it's really like to be a member of provincial Parliament. Not only was it a great exercise for them to learn how provincial politics operate, but it gave us all a chance to find out what issues matter to them. Their generation will lead our province, and it's critical that we understand what issues are important to them.

It was a great three days, and I'm looking forward to meeting a new round of model parliamentarians next year.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: There's a serious issue I would like to address today, and that is the respect of some members of the government when it comes to answering tough questions in the Legislature.

I hear from constituents how difficult it is to trust the government these days, including the Premier. I'm embarrassed to say that I often understand these sentiments and often even agree with them. When our very own government refuses to answer questions and instead constantly deflects serious issues, it is a travesty. It hurts our democracy, and it reduces citizens' trust in government.

I will provide a recent example. Only yesterday, the member from Huron-Bruce asked the Premier about the actions of her deputy chief of staff. The Premier used the occasion to provide praise for Nellie McClung. I agree that Nellie McClung is an important historical figure, as she dedicated much of her life to ensuring gender equality in Canada. However, the Premier's refusal to answer the question and instead provide a brief monologue on a different issue is problematic. It demonstrates the lack of respect that the government has for members of the opposition and a lack of transparency.

I urge the Premier and her ministers to answer questions seriously, and I look forward to honest responses; so do the rest of Ontarians.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: On May 22, 2015, the Ontario Northland bus stations in Englehart and Matheson are scheduled to close. Service hours in other centres will be reduced. This announcement, once again, rocked the north, and you can't blame northerners for being shell-shocked. In the last four years, we've suffered the loss of the Metrolinx refurbishment contract; the cancellation of our only passenger train, the Northlander; the announced divestment of the ONTC, which we collectively fought back, only to be followed by the sale of Ontera.

We were promised an enhanced bus service, but it only happened after residents took their case to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and then we got handicapped buses. And now, these bus stations are closed. We are told that it's going to be to streamline the

service to actually improve the service, and we have been told that so many times.

We're encouraged by the appointment of Tom Laughren as chair of the ONTC, a northerner who we hope understands—who we truly believe understands—our plight. We think that is a huge step in the right direction. But the test will now be to see, with these bus service changes, is service actually improved or is it just another attempt to put more nails in the coffin of the ONTC?

BRUYÈRE CONTINUING CARE

SOINS CONTINUS BRUYÈRE

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Monsieur le Président, the Ottawa community is proud to be the home of Bruyère Continuing Care and its three locations. The staff and board at Bruyère are champions of our aging community through compassionate care, research and advocacy.

On February 20, they celebrated the 170th anniversary of Mother Élisabeth Bruyère coming to Ottawa. In 1845, Mother Bruyère and three Sisters opened the first bilingual school in Ontario. Since then, the organization has continued its cause by opening hospitals, long-term-care homes, research institutes and more.

J'étais très fière de participer au déjeuner organisé par Bruyère à la Résidence Saint-Louis. J'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer le personnel, que je remercie pour l'excellent travail, ainsi que de partager un moment particulier avec les Soeurs de la Charité.

As members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and on behalf of the constituents of Ottawa–Orléans, I extend—in memory of Mother Élisabeth Bruyère—my sincere congratulations and best wishes in recognition of the 170th anniversary of providing compassionate care in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

1510

MCCAMUS MAPLE SYRUP

Ms. Laurie Scott: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the Haliburton Kawartha Maple Syrup Producers Association's 2015 annual first tapping ceremony, hosted by the McCamus family sugar shack and maple bush. Robert McCamus and his wife Mary Ellen invited local representatives to tap the first trees of the season and to bless the 2015 maple syrup harvest, followed by tasty homemade maple syrup beans and maple syrup tarts.

The McCamus family has been making maple syrup and farming the beautiful hills of Cavan township—located, of course, in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—since first settling in the area in 1820, after immigrating from Cavan county in Ireland. Over the years, the sugar bush has grown in size, and the McCamus family, generation to generation, has continued to produce maple syrup on the same land. Over the years, the methods have changed from horse and wagon and a

gathering team to the new pipeline systems we see today. With each generation, the farm adapts to carry on the tradition.

This year marks 100 consecutive years of maple syrup production. This amazing achievement demonstrates the McCamus family's hard work, dedication to their craft and love of their land. This winter, the McCamus family were also celebrated at the 2014 Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, receiving numerous awards, including the C.P. Corbett Trophy, highest point total and a premier exhibitor trophy.

Brad McCamus, the fourth generation of maple syrup producers, was recently highlighted in a short documentary video series which features independent artists and artisans making a living doing what they love. I encourage all to visit mccamusmaplesyrup.com to watch this short video and learn more about the McCamus family's syrup. Thank you, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Members' statements?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess my patience was too good. I have another statement for people to make, and I'd like some order, please.

The member from Barrie, for your statement.

GILDA'S CLUB SIMCOE MUSKOKA

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. On Friday, February 27, Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka held their annual Gildathon radio fundraising event in Barrie. More than \$21,000 was donated on Friday, with donations still coming in from local community partners. The money raised will be used to provide Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka's comprehensive program of emotional support for men, women and children diagnosed with cancer and everyone who cares for them.

The year 2015 marks the fifth anniversary for this great local organization. Since opening their signature red door in the spring of 2010, Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka's program of free social and emotional support continues to be an essential complement to medical care in Barrie, Simcoe county and Muskoka. Their talented and passionate team includes individuals such as Brenda Pinder Parsons, chair of the board of directors, Patricia Gilbert, Eileen Campeau, Deborah Loosemore, Kristen Dawson, Katherine Speirs and many more.

The men, women and children in the Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka program learn about cancer screening and diagnosis, treatment options and side effects. They also participate in seminars and workshops covering many topics related to living with a cancer diagnosis, survivorship, family impact, bereavement and wellness.

All funds to operate Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka's innovative cancer support program are raised from individuals, foundations, events and corporations. Community support is vital and ensures that their program remains free of charge, so that no one faces cancer alone.

Thanks to the Gilda's Club volunteers and staff who work to make a bout with cancer a little less stressful for all involved.

MODEL PARLIAMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: Last week I had the pleasure of being invited to participate in the 2015 model Parliament. Bringing together young people from across Ontario, the annual Queen's Park model Parliament gives them an opportunity to spend three days watching and learning how this Legislature works.

I'm proud to have seen two bright young boys in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, Kevin Vuong and Daven Siu, taking part in the model Parliament. Kevin, a grade 12 student at Dr. Norman Bethune, was selected to be the Minister of Labour. Daven, a grade 10 student at the Crestwood academy, was the representative for Scarborough-Agincourt.

I'd like to thank Minister Flynn and Minister Coteau for taking the time to meet with both Kevin and Daven. They really enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and the advice you gave them.

On Friday, I was honoured to be asked to join the model Parliament participants in the chamber. I had the pleasure of being the Speaker and moderating the debate on organ donation. It was really great to see how passionate these young people were about this important health issue. I hope they continue to be engaged, passionate and interested in politics, as they were last week. We may see them back here one day as MPPs.

I would like to congratulate and thank the Clerk, Deb Deller, and her entire staff for organizing the annual model Parliament. As well, I want to thank my colleagues who participated in the 2015 model Parliament. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Bailey assumes ballot item number 39 and Ms. MacLeod assumes ballot item number 48.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on the intended appointments dated March 3, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also, pursuant to the order of the House dated July 24, 2014, the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than Thursday, November 27, 2014.

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Thursday, November 27, 2014, as required by the order of the House dated July 24, 2014, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2014-15 of these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

Mr. Rinaldi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à protéger les régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Speaker. The purpose of the bill is to protect registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds as well as deferred profit sharing plans from most creditors. Those plans are, however, still subject to support orders enforced under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, respecting the separation of property in family matters.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today to recognize the fourth annual Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. This week, in classrooms

across this great country, our elementary and high school students will connect with and celebrate agriculture. In my opinion, this is a wonderful thing.

I want to applaud the efforts of Agriculture in the Classroom Canada for building our students' food literacy. In collaboration, organizations like Ontario Agri-Food Education here in our province work to teach students about food, farming and agriculture.

1520

Mr. Speaker, you truly see the impact that these programs have the first time a child watches seeds they planted earlier in the year grow into vegetables they snack on at lunch, or when a high school class debates what the future of agriculture in this great province would look like. It's an incredible experience for our students and one that stays with them for a lifetime. By helping our children understand the value and importance of agriculture, we build a strong local food culture.

Our government is committed to supporting the good things grown and harvested in Ontario, and we all know that wonderful song. It is why we created the Local Food Act. The Local Food Act contains a number of provisions to help promote local products. These include Local Food Week, which happens annually at the start of June, our new food donation tax credit for farmers—I want to recognize the great work that was done on this file by the member for Sarnia-Lambton, our colleague Mr. Bob Bailey—and our newly established food literacy goals. All of these initiatives help to strengthen our local food culture and, in turn, strengthen this great province.

The Local Food Act is the first legislation of its kind in Canada and came through the collaborative support of everybody, all 107 members in this Legislature. I want to thank all 107 members for that support.

Mr. Speaker, along with building awareness of Ontario foods, we also need to look to the future. We need to encourage the next generation of agricultural leaders. Ontario's agriculture and agri-food sector is full of opportunities—unlimited opportunities. As an economic driver for our province, this sector contributes \$34 billion to our GDP each and every year and employs over 760,000 Ontarians each and every day.

All of us in this Legislature want to see these numbers grow. That's why Premier Wynne challenged the sector to create 120,000 new jobs by the year 2020. Some of these good jobs will be filled by students who have developed a passion for agriculture, in part through the Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week programming.

My ministry supports a wide variety of organizations, like Ontario Agri-Food Education, Ontario 4-H, whose model is "Learn to do by doing," and agricultural societies, as they help educate Ontario's youth and show them the possibilities of a career in agriculture.

We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to support agricultural learning so that the next generation learns about the exciting opportunities across the entire agri-food chain, from growing and harvesting to producing and processing.

A healthy agricultural sector is crucial to the success of our province. That's why I feel that the Canadian

Agriculture Literacy Week is so important, not only to our students but to everyone who resides in this wonderful province.

I'd like to thank Ontario Agri-Food Education for all of its work to help connect our students to high-quality food grown and processed right here in Ontario.

I encourage all of my colleagues, all 107 colleagues, to spend some time this week talking to a student, a family member or a co-worker about Ontario agriculture. That will benefit us all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm certainly pleased to speak about Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. We certainly know that Ontario is key within our dominion of Canada with respect to agriculture, food, agribusiness. We contribute \$34 billion annually, and something in the order of 740,000 jobs. Despite these impressive numbers, agricultural literacy remains a bit of a struggle, not only across the nation but in this province as well.

This is something that comes up at the all-candidates' nights down my way. This question will come up: Do you know the difference between hay and straw? That's the benchmark to get elected down my way.

Other questions: Do you know where tofu comes from, for example? Do you know the difference between Jersey milk and Holstein milk?

Interjection: One is chocolate and the other is white.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Many people would know.

Another question: Do young people know about the good jobs that are available, not only in farming, but in food production, processing, restaurants, and agribusiness in general?

I spent a number of years teaching high school agriculture. In many ways, we have gone backwards. We lost that program. It morphed into environmental science.

I taught agriculture at the post-secondary level as well. Many of my students didn't have a farm background. They loved the course; I loved teaching it. I would see my students later on in business. Maybe they're pumping gas and their customers are farmers. Maybe they're working with their dad in a plumbing business or electrical and they're working with farmers. Oftentimes in their businesses, their suppliers come from the ag sector.

Obviously, the availability of skilled labour has emerged as a challenge for food processors. I know MPP Ernie Hardeman will recognize this statement in his white paper that was produced before the last election: 65% of food processors say they have difficulties with staffing. So, two main issues, as we know: the ability to recruit and the ability to find people with the required skills.

I commend my colleague MPP Lisa Thompson, the member for Huron-Bruce, for her work in bringing to light the need for Ontario to promote the careers that are out there in agriculture and agri-food.

These challenges were recently underscored in a report, Planning for Ontario's Future Agri-Food Workforce, from the Ontario Agricultural College. That's where I did my master's. The report identifies the need for increased awareness of the currently underutilized

agri-food post-secondary programs—I know we're focusing on elementary and secondary, which is also so important—and the need for the creation of new programs to meet the new skills and education required by the industry.

Of course, the history of agriculture goes back 3,000 years, with the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys, but in the last hundred years, obviously, we've come from the pitchfork, which is still used—many of us here probably did grow up forking manure. Many of us continue to fork manure. You learn a lot. I had a lot of very good conversations with my father and my grandfather forking cattle manure. You take a break, you lean on the fork and you talk politics. That's where I learned some of the—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's kind of like this place.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Something like this place.

Look at today and the advent of precision agriculture, with the use of the GPS systems for precision farming—putting those seeds down a field, maybe for half a mile, in exactly that same row that you put them on a year ago.

The use of drones: Again, is there a course for agricultural instruction with the use of drones?

Again, we have to train people not only to be able to walk into a combine and know how to turn a wrench, but they've also got to know how to calibrate that computer.

What we're talking about here is ever-important for our young people and obviously for the future of agriculture in the province of Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. It's especially an honour to be able to stand and talk about an agricultural issue on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath.

This is the fourth annual Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. As more and more people move away from the country and move into the city, this becomes more and more important. We all talk about the importance of agriculture.

We all know about the importance of agriculture to this province, but quite frankly, the number of people involved in the various sectors in the agri-food industry aren't a big portion of the population. Sometimes decisions are made that impact them by people who, quite frankly, don't understand the issues. That's why this is so important.

1530

As I was doing the research for my talk today, it came to my attention that Farm Credit Canada is sponsoring a lot of activities for this week in Ontario. That's a plug for Farm Credit because they sponsored me through my agricultural career as well. It ranges from in primary classes, where you can talk to a farmer—they will bring a farmer to a class to talk to primary students—to university level, where you can listen to an online streaming debate about the value of GMO foods. Those are both incredibly important issues.

I've had talks here and at committee level about the difference between organic milk and regular milk, and what the pros and cons are, because people know I used to be a dairy farmer. Those are relevant discussions.

We have so many agricultural issues that are decided by the general population through their support or non-support, by governments through their decisions, and they are incredibly complex issues. The issues we face now with pollinators, with neonicotinoids; the issue with GMO foods; the issue of whether the 100-mile diet is a good idea. But is it the answer to all our agricultural problems? Not necessarily.

The only way we're going to make decisions that are beneficial to ourselves and to our children is to have full knowledge of the sector. And the sector is more than down home on the farm, it's more than the processing sector, it's more than the farmers' market, and it's more than the supermarket. It's all of those things together, and so much more. It's easy for me to talk about things that happen on the farm; I spent most of my life there.

It was interesting yesterday what we were discussing with the wine council. I was on the board of a small cheese factory. Some of the issues that face small cheese factories regarding marketing are the same issues that face small VQA wineries. There are so many issues out there that unless you have a full understanding—and that understanding has to come from day one. Kids have to know where their food comes from, high school students have to know where the jobs come from, and we as legislators have to know what drives the agriculture sector, what drives Ontario and what drives the world.

We had an interesting discussion recently: The Agriculture Insurance Act is still on the table, and one of the issues is the impact of climate change. We hear this government talk a lot about climate change. Climate change is going to impact agriculture. It's also going to impact how farmers insure themselves. That's something we have to take into account, because if we don't take those things into account, we're wasting our time and wasting opportunities. That's the most important thing: We don't want to waste opportunities.

One of the things that I have found in the three years that I've been here is that we don't take enough time to ensure that what we say here and the laws that are created here actually work on the ground, in the country—especially when you're talking about Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. We have to make sure that what we do in the legislatures of this country, and specifically in this Legislature, actually makes sense for farmers and for farm communities on the ground.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a petition here on behalf of residents of Bob Delaney's riding of Mississauga—Streetsville.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition and hand it over to the page.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that comes from Sudbury but also from 13 other campuses of Everest College.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 2,400 students and 450 Everest staff are impacted by the 14 college location closures across Ontario, putting a financial strain on students, employees and their families; and

"Whereas students have the right to finish their programs, avoid unnecessary delays with graduation dates and not incur further financial costs of having to apply to another accredited institution to complete their program; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been aware of the financial and legal difficulties facing Everest College and the US parent Corinthian Colleges for months; and

"Whereas students cannot afford to put their life on hold while the government struggles to sort out the mess involving another private college;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To act in a prompt manner and protect the interest of Everest students by providing an extension for paying

back OSAP loans, ensuring a full refund is provided and that students can complete their program without delay at another accredited institution."

I fully support those students in this petition, will affix my name and ask Andrew to bring it to the table.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I'm pleased to support my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London in this. It reads as follows:

"Whereas individuals with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and families are not being properly supported in southwestern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services need to develop a comprehensive care strategy that appoints a lead ministry with responsibility for coordinating FASD management and prevention efforts;

"Whereas the provincial government needs to reallocate funding to increase FASD diagnostic and treatment capacity in Ontario, increase community and educational supports and increase prevention efforts across the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario take a cross-ministerial approach in developing a comprehensive care strategy that supports and promotes best practices in FASD management and prevention and provides appropriate supports for individuals with FASD so that they may access the necessary services."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with page Julie.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it with page Natalie.

1540

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to appeal Ontario's breed-specific legislation.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I couldn't agree more. On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized, I'm going to give this to Dhairya to be delivered to the table.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is a province of immigrants, representing over 200 countries and speaking more than 130 languages; and

"Whereas Ontario is the primary destination for newcomers to Ontario, receiving more immigrants than the combined total of most of Canada's provinces and territories; and

"Whereas Ontario is dependent on skilled immigrant labour to fill jobs, 2.5 million of which are estimated to be created in the next 10 years; and

"Whereas a stronger immigration partnership with the federal government will allow Ontario to work with employers and communities to assess labour force needs and bring in highly-skilled workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and give my petition to page William.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In light of the many wide-ranging concerns being raised by Ontario citizens and 80-plus action groups across Ontario and the irrefutable international evidence of a flawed technology, health concerns, environmental effects, bird and bat kills, property losses, the tearing apart of families, friends and communities, and unprecedented costs;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare an Ontario-wide moratorium on the development of wind farms."

I totally agree with this petition. I'll sign it and send it to the desk with Hannah.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to enter this petition into the record. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it to the Clerks' table through Morgan.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities

and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage," compared to those who do;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name to it and leave it with Inaya.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care

partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Ishani.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition collected from across Windsor and Essex county. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2013, 16 Ontario construction workers were killed in tragic falls, almost 3,400 WSIB fall claims were accepted and many, many other falls were never even reported;

"Whereas in addition to the human tragedy of workplace falls, the financial cost of each year's WSIB fall claims is about \$100 million;

"Whereas the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador implemented new fall protection training regulations on Jan. 1, 2012, after which fall claims declined by 25%;

"Whereas a similar training requirement and result in Ontario could prevent over 800 fall tragedies each year and avoid \$25 million in cost to the WSIB; and

"Whereas in 2010 the Ontario government promised to implement a similar training requirement by 2012, but still has not done so; and has thereby left workers in peril at a cost of over \$50 million in costs to the WSIB;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Labour to make saving workers' lives a priority and stop delaying fall protection training regulations."

I fully agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Dhairya to take up.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province...."

I'll affix my signature to this, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member.

Just as a reminder: If you have a very lengthy petition, so that others can get other petitions in, I would appreciate it if perhaps you could somehow find a way, not to take away from the message—to still get your message out there—but to shorten it to some degree.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, the member for Welland had the floor, with time remaining. Is the member from Welland here this afternoon?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're not supposed to say that. It's against the rules.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I suppose you're not supposed to say that, either, so we're even.

Further debate? I recognize the member from York-Simcoe.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Simcoe North. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 40 today.

I understand that it's one of these love-in kinds of bills. Everybody likes Bill 40 and the Agriculture Insurance Act. I think, if properly implemented, it probably would be a really good bill. But I look at some of the things that I worry about, and I want to bring those up today. I also want to make a few other comments and talk about how important agriculture is to me.

First of all, I should tell you that I was raised in a family in construction. My dad thought myself and my

two brothers might be bad guys at times and cause a lot of trouble and that kind of thing, so on the side he bought a farm, because he wanted to keep us off the streets. Okay? That was when we were little wee guys. He wanted to make sure that me and my two brothers, if we did have any time off after working seven days a week, could still go and work on the farm; we didn't go downtown and go to the bowling alley or any of those kinds of things.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's why you have the values that you do.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, that's why I have those values. My dad was one of these guys that thought if you didn't work 100 hours a week, you weren't really much good. That's kind of how we were raised.

I should also say that the girl I married, Jane, is a dairy farmer's daughter. Her dad died very young, of cancer. She wasn't able to work—she was only in her early teens when her dad died.

Both of my kids—Jill has a farm. It's a horse farm and it's right across from a major horse farm. They sell the hay to the farm and that type of thing. My son, Andy, who is an excavator operator and a plumber, has a farm as well, and they cash-crop that farm. That's kind of a deal where I'm always being dragged in, because if it's not my tools he's using, he's asking me to go out and work part-time on the farm, fixing barn doors and trying to get the hay wagons together and that kind of thing. It's back to where I started 60 years ago, almost. Now my son wants to keep me off the streets, too, from working too hard.

That's my relationship to farming.

I have a brother-in-law, Ron Shaw. Ron Shaw is a hog farmer. They've got a farm, and I should point out that it's a maple sugar bush. They tap something like 15,000 trees. It has been in the family for over 100 years. Now his son Tommy and his wife, Terri-Lynn, operate that. So we've got kind of a close connection to agriculture.

Not only that, but if you talk to the Simcoe county dairy producers or the Simcoe County Federation of Agriculture, they kind of remind you if you're doing something wrong here. The Simcoe county boys have a very large voice, and they tend to get out and make a lot of comments about things that are going wrong here at Queen's Park.

When Mr. Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, talked about crazy questions, I couldn't believe that anybody would not know the difference between hay and straw. Surely that would be everybody's top priority. I'll tell you, we see a lot of straw baled today from the big mega farms, where a lot of the guys take off wheat and oats and, of course, they bale the straw and sell it off in huge amounts. We see them piled up along the side of the road. They are sold to people in certain businesses. A lot of it used to be sold to the harness racing industry. That's gone. They don't sell any to the harness racing industry anymore.

I'll talk a little bit more about the harness racing industry in a couple of minutes, because it's a very sore point with me.

I also want to point out the difference between Ayrshires and Holsteins. Everyone knows the Holsteins are the big dairy cows; the Ayrshires are the small ones.

I want to pay a compliment to a couple of my colleagues in Simcoe county, two dairy farmers who have just become involved in municipal politics.

Rob Keffer, the mayor of Bradford West Gwillimbury, is a friend I've known since we started working on the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. Rob is a phenomenal dairy farmer, and he was just recently elected as the mayor of Bradford West Gwillimbury. I talked to him the other night at Good Roads. He's doing a great job and he really enjoys it.

Also, we've got a new councillor up in Oro-Medonte: Scott Jerney. Scott is councillor for ward 5. He runs an operation of about 200 Ayrshires. They milk about 200 Ayrshire cattle on a huge operation in Oro-Medonte. He has done very well, and we are so pleased that he brings this businesslike attitude and perspective to municipal politics in that area, because at times I feel that township is getting a little too bureaucratic. Now I'm so happy that Scott is there. I've talked to him a few times, and it's great to see the fact that some of the municipal councillors are actually running for these positions.

The farmers in Simcoe county tend to be very, very political. They drive a lot of agendas, and they try to get their concerns across. I can mention a couple of those in a second.

Bill 40: I have a couple of things I'm concerned about. I know it's covering livestock now, but it's going to be really interesting to see how this falls, like if animals die a certain way on the farm. You'd better start looking at what happens with coyotes when they kill livestock right now. That's a major problem in some areas.

I had a meeting just the other day with township people in the township of Oro-Medonte and an organization called Big Curve Acres. They feed animals and grow them for things like the Christmas villages, that type of thing. For specific reasons, they'll grow goats and reindeer and different species.

These animals are being killed by the coyotes, and it's almost a non-stop watch on this all the time. The coyotes rip them apart. When the coyotes kill a reindeer or a deer, and they're doing it all through the woods etc.—and I don't just specifically refer to the coyotes that kill the wild deer. I'm talking about ones that are killing them on farms that are growing the deer. It's sad, what happens; they basically eat them alive.

The reality is that no one seems to be paying attention to this. OMAFRA has got a group involved. MNR—you can talk until you're blue in the face. Nothing happens. I can tell you, if there's going to be a real insurance act dealing with livestock, it had better have an impact on people who are growing this type of livestock. I think it's sad, and I think that the way the government handles coyotes, and the coyote kills, is really bad.

I know there's a whole series of people who believe you can't kill any kind of an animal, and it's wrong to have any kind of a cull. They'll come out in droves with

different wildlife organizations and that sort of thing. But the reality is that if you've ever seen an animal torn apart—a goat or a lamb ripped apart by a coyote—you might have a second thought. And when it starts hitting little Fido and the little dogs in your yards, that's when you have another thought. And worse still, when something happens to children, that's going to be a problem.

I want to put it on the record today for sure. Let's make sure, if this act has any teeth at all, that in the regulations we specifically deal with animals that are predators on farm animals and on animals that are being raised for agricultural purposes. It's very, very important that that takes place. Not everyone can raise their animals in a mega barn, like some of the hogs are raised etc. Some of them are actually outside, and those are the ones that are being identified badly. I really want to make sure that's on the record.

Another thing, when we talk about insurances—I think most of our municipalities in Ontario have fairly large municipal drains in them. My wife is a council member in the township of Severn, and we've got some problems right in that township as well. The drains have not been maintained for 20 or 25 years. There has not been any kind of a program put in place to clean the drains. This is usually done with the permission of the owners; the owners pay part of those costs. But when you leave it that long, major problems develop. First of all, trees and that grow; little shrubs and trees will grow right in the ditches. That causes even worse flooding, and that worse flooding backs up on the farm fields, and some of the fields are soaked until way beyond the time when you can put in the proper crops.

1600

If there are teeth in the legislation, it also has to have teeth in the things that impact the insurance purposes. Is there someone in Ontario who actually picks up the phone each day or each year and says to the municipality, "How are your municipal drains coming along? Have you got a cleaning program in place?" Those municipal drains were put in there for a purpose, for agricultural purposes, to drain land so people can properly grow crops on land. I'm sure it happens in most municipalities right across our province. I know that there are municipal drain inspectors. I just think it's a mishmash right now. I think there are just too many unanswered questions. I think if we're going to really properly have an insurance act, then make sure that things like the municipal drains have some kind of a coordinated effort so that someone is actually keeping an eye on them so they can be properly cleaned.

The same thing applies to MNR. No one takes responsibility for trees that fall into these rivers. You just can't go out and remove a tree from the river, because then you'll kill the fish habitat, that type of thing. In some cases, it's wildlife as well, with mink and fishers and those sorts of animals. I also think that there's a responsibility here, and I know it's a complete new silo, but I think there's a responsibility with MNR and making sure that if they're going to actually look after natural

resources, when a tree falls down in a river, it's actually allowed to be cleaned out. It's allowed to be taken out, and there's some kind of effort from MNR to approve that without only dealing with the problems around the fish habitat.

Here's the problem: These trees fall in a river, and they become a dam. We're going to see a lot in Ontario in the next two or three weeks when we start getting milder weather. The conservation authorities will all be out there screaming. There's floods; flooding could happen. In a lot of cases, the flooding is not necessary. When the ice jams up against the trees, then it creates a natural dam, and the natural dam goes back on the waters and floods wetland areas as well. In many cases, it floods the agricultural lands—it's the same as the municipal drains—to the point where people can't get on the crops as early as they'd like to. It is a real problem.

I just think that when you're talking about having this new legislation—it looks like everybody is inside; it's wonderful, it's wonderful, it's wonderful. Are we actually going to be dealing with these kinds of problems, or is it going to be some kind of a part of the area where no one will really be concerned about it, and we'll be back here fighting for an amendment a few years from now?

I also wanted to say one other thing. I don't have a lot to say on all these things, but I think what's important is, as an agricultural community, as a province that depends on agriculture, it's the heart and soul, the backbone of our history. I'm not sure how many people are aware, but we actually had at one time an agricultural party in Ontario, a farming union party. E.C. Drury was the Premier back in the 1920s. There's a huge picture of Mr. Drury out there. He wrote a book on that. I recommend it to everybody. If you ever have a chance to read the book by E.C. Drury called the Farmer Premier, you'll see some interesting things he did. For example, he was the Premier who brought in uniforms for the OPP. Who would have thought that? You would have thought that would have been some guy in downtown Toronto, a Bill Blair fan, who would have brought in uniforms for the police officers. But no, it was actually an agricultural Premier who brought that in. There are all kinds of neat things in that book that people should think of.

It was actually the last time for that particular organization. They thought they could do better than the Liberals, better than the Conservatives, better than the NDP at the time, and they had their own party, and they formed government, I believe, for five or six years at the time.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon? Yes, they did a good job.

So back to my problem that I wanted to zero in on at the very beginning, the harness racing industry. Does anybody remember here about three years ago when the finance minister and Paul Godfrey—remember that thing called the casino modernization plan? It was a big deal. There were going to be casinos all over the place. Everybody wanted a casino. There was going to be one in

Vaughan, one downtown and more in Niagara. Whatever happened to that disaster? You know what? It went with 40,000 jobs in the harness racing industry. That's what happened to it. Where was the insurance for them? Does anybody know: Did any of those guys get any insurance? I know of nobody. I know of many, many people who were put out of business. As I said earlier, the farmers used to sell literally millions of dollars in crops like hay and straw to that industry. No longer. A lot of those farms now are for sale. They're cash-cropping it, but those people are no longer working in Ontario. There were going to be all kinds of casinos built that they said would have worked, but that whole thing was a flop, a disaster. It's hard to imagine that we're sitting here today patting ourselves on the back over the Agriculture Insurance Act, Bill 40, when we as a Parliament let that slide by us.

The harness racing industry in Ontario is a disaster, and everyone in this room knows it. There's only a few people making money, and that's the big tracks. The little guys are out of it. They're gone. They are out of business today. I find that the whole thing has been a disgrace, to be a citizen of Ontario and to allow that to happen to a really vulnerable group of people. They got no insurance—no insurance for anything. They are on their own. I can tell you of guys who used to have 30 or 40 horses; now they might have one or two, and they're not worth anything. Many of them were sold for meat for other animals or that sort of thing. It's a disgrace, what happened to a system that was a model—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Around the world.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It was a model around the world, and we let it slide by. Here we are today patting ourselves on the back about Bill 40 when we allowed that to happen to many of our agricultural stakeholders.

If you look back at the whole Slots at Racetracks Program, the whole thing from the very beginning was to enhance the agricultural industry. That was their mission statement, but we allowed that to slide by, and it's disgraceful that that actually happened.

So I'd appreciate comments on that, because I know I can come up with hundreds of names of people who have been put out of business by that. I'd be interested in hearing what the government says, as we pat ourselves on the back over Bill 40, about how they would handle insurance purposes on that bill or on that particular program, because it was the casino modernization plan that was the beginning of the end for the harness racing industry in Ontario. I'm not saying we don't have an industry still, but it's a fraction of what it used to be—a fraction.

So that's sort of it in a nutshell for me. I can talk here all day, as you know, but I just think that we should not—when we deal with Bill 40 and we deal with the regulations, let's make sure two things happen: first of all, that farmers know this applies to them. Many times, and we've seen it with, for example, the child care modernization plan, they didn't know what was happening to them. Many things have happened in this House where

there has been a lack of consultation. Let's make sure that farmers actually know this exists so they know what's available to them, and let's make sure it's implemented properly.

Some of the things I brought out, like the municipal drainage act and many of the things I brought out in my comments today—make sure that they are actually addressed in the regulations and not something where, you know, a year later, when there are some animals killed by coyotes, they are still fighting with OMAFRA and MNR, and this whole bill will mean nothing to them.

On the positive side, if we can take steps to help the agriculture industry with Bill 40, I'm all behind it, and I will be voting in favour of this. All I'm trying to point out is what I see as negative here, some of the things that I see that could be a barrier down the road to agriculture.

Keep this in mind: The one final comment I'd say is that people in agriculture are some of the hardest-working people that we have in our country. They don't get a lot of winter vacations, in most cases. If you're a dairy farmer today and if you don't have a huge operation, you're basically on that farm 365 days a year. That's how many of those people raise their—whatever we do with those people who work 365, let's give them some kind of a break, so that they can get less red tape, less bureaucracy. Let them earn their living and let them look after their families in a responsible and respected manner, the manner that they deserve to be respected in.

1610

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close my remarks there. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words very much, and I look forward to the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on the bill before us: Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act. I had the pleasure to speak to this bill last week, and I brought up some important ideas and concerns that members of my community of Essex have raised when it comes to agriculture, and specifically, the way that the provincial government deals with agriculture in Ontario: in an ad hoc manner, and one that really doesn't put enough emphasis and priority in terms of its position in our economy. That position is one that I think is of the utmost importance when it comes to food security, food sovereignty and the ability for your own region to feed itself, quite literally.

The Agriculture Insurance Act is enabling legislation. It allows the government to bring other commodities that are currently not covered by business risk management programs or agriculture insurance programs into the fold of the provincial government. Without any type of dollar amount attached to it, it's simply a good gesture. It's not necessarily a remedy for what we know is really important: the ability for farmers to have a predictable and bankable support mechanism to continue their operations and be able to buffer those difficult times, whether it be economic conditions or environmental conditions.

I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Agriculture in terms of how much money he's willing to

attach to these new commodities that will be brought into the fold. I would recommend that it be substantial, because there are many that will eat up the bulk amount that is currently allocated on their own if things go awry.

Speaker, there are so many things that we could be doing in agriculture provincially: a buy-Ontario procurement strategy; a standing committee on agriculture; apprenticeship programs for youth who want to join the industry. We're not doing enough. It's simply piecemeal and ad hoc, but this is a step, I think, in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Although the member took a bit of liberty with the topic, I have to take one of his digressions and agree with him. I agree with the member on the coyote issue. Coyotes are an invasive species. Both in cities and in rural areas, we need effective measures to deal with non-native invasive species in Ontario. The syndrome that he described about coyotes killing livestock is no less true in the city, where they rip apart pets. Although it's a digression, I've got to say that I'm on his side on that one.

Speaker, the bill is about production insurance, which is something that covers losses and yield reductions that are caused by things against which you're insured. In other words, it's not unlike your home in that respect. Producers can choose the type and the level of coverage that best meets their needs. For example, in 2013, there were more than 14,000 insurance customers representing five million acres and nearly \$3 billion in liabilities that were ensured under the production insurance program. In practical terms, this is available for some 90 commercially grown crops, which would include, but certainly isn't limited to, such things as grains and oilseeds, tree fruits and grapes, processing vegetables, fresh market vegetables, specialty crops and forage.

A lot of us will remember, back in decades past, when you would read in the news that various levels of government would pay producers not to grow something or whatever. Most developed countries do offer subsidized production insurance, so increasingly governments are focusing on insurance-based measures to deal with random events rather than direct payments to producers.

Speaker, with that, I look forward to hearing the balance of the debate and to seeing speedy passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I really appreciate the comments that we have heard over the last few minutes from my colleague from Simcoe North. He was very, very astute in pointing out the barriers that Ontario farmers are facing with regard to primary production in this province. He is very much on the mark when he touches on—if we're talking about true issues, legislation that touches on insurance and true issues in Ontario, we have to think about coyotes, particularly with small ruminants. He was spot-on.

The other thing that we heard him say is that this legislation—albeit that we're supporting it because it's

necessary to catch things up, we find it very fluffy. If this government of the day was truly committed to the agri-food industry in Ontario, they'd be in touch with huge issues that are happening. For instance, the member from Simcoe North mentioned his boys—his farmers—are very engaged and they let him know where things are at.

I have to say, in my riding of Huron—Bruce, we have a farming industry that is second to none. What I'm hearing is, you know, enough with the fluff legislation. Let's talk about what really matters. With the price of beef going through the roof, the feeder finance program, as it's defined today, doesn't cut the mustard any longer. I appreciate that the minister will be addressing it, but it's long overdue—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Stay tuned.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: —and I look forward to hearing about it.

Another thing that we're hearing about is the Risk Management Program. The cap that the Liberal government put in place absolutely has handcuffed some folks. With that, when we're talking about primary production, we have a provincial government that needs to be listening to all farmers across this province.

I would also like to share, in my final moments, that we need awareness and education as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was enthralled when the member from Simcoe North was speaking on the bill and he reminded me about the collapse of the harness racing industry in Ontario.

I have to tell you, Speaker—and I've told you this before—when they closed down the slots at Windsor Raceway, and the track eventually closed and we lost 3,000 jobs, that was the motivating factor for me to join the political party I did, the NDP. It was the first time I ever joined a party, but that was the reason. It was to get back at the Liberals for throwing 3,000 people out of work in my area. I know that my friend from Nickel Belt—Sudbury Downs was closed, and 200 people lost their jobs up there.

We can't make up for what the Liberals have done. They said they did it because the tracks weren't accountable. Instead of making them accountable, instead of looking after the little guy, they shut down the little tracks and kept the big tracks open. The big tracks were the ones that weren't accountable, that they couldn't harness in, if you will.

When I heard the member from Simcoe North talking about that, it just reminded me about the number of friends I have still, to this day, in the local harness racing industry in Windsor and Essex county.

We're trying to get a new track, Speaker. As you know, they run the races—a dozen races or so—with the Leamington Fairgrounds. We're trying to get a new track, trying to get more racing dates in Windsor and Essex county, to prove to the government that it can be done. The handle that they bring in in Leamington is higher than at a lot of the other tracks that are still operat-

ing. We can prove that we can make a track work in Windsor and Essex county, and we would like that opportunity. I call on the minister to work with us, to work with the people he has appointed to the commission. We can do it. We can make it happen. We can restore that part of the industry in our part of the province.

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Simcoe North for his final comments.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I thank the members from Essex, Mississauga—Streetsville, Huron—Bruce and Windsor—Tecumseh for their comments as well.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for his comments on the coyote, on a possible cull or just awareness. This is a real problem. It periodically hits different parts of our province. Right now, in Simcoe county, it's really bad. Basically, there are hardly any deer left, and they're attacking farm animals and pets as well. There's a huge coyote population. Now I'm hearing rumours of them coming to the GTA and being seen in the cities and that sort of thing. I just think it's something we have to be very careful of. I'm not sure how it exactly falls into insurance, but it does fall into awareness of what insurance should do if, in fact, farm animals are killed by coyotes, and we don't have some runaround with OMAFRA and MNR over what actually happened.

1620

In the end, one of the really good things about this bill, and I'll thank the minister for this: It does bring agriculture awareness to a piece of legislation. I thank you for that, Minister, because we need more agricultural-type bills so that we can debate and brag about the agricultural industry in Ontario.

The member from Huron—Bruce calls her riding, I think, Ontario's west coast. I believe there's more agriculture that takes place in that riding than all of the Maritimes put together. These are all parts that we should be bragging about and having awareness on.

I thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today. Of course, we'll be passing this bill, but we'll be looking very carefully at the results of it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to speak on Bill 40 today. As many of you know, I came from manufacturing, my background. So perhaps I'm not as much of an expert on the bill, like my colleagues and the NDP agricultural critic.

With that being said, my riding, which includes Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, has a very active agricultural community. We have farms growing grapes for our incredible Niagara wines. We have orchards that produce world-class fruit and, of course, we have an incredible array of livestock in my riding. Even though I personally have never been a farmer, I understand the incredibly important role of agriculture in the province of Ontario and in the Niagara region.

The agri-food business brings over \$30 billion into the Ontario economy each year and fuels in some way upwards of 750,000 jobs. This industry is a major economic driver and a major job producer. Those stats alone show that this industry needs the support of government. Directly, this is driven by the upwards of 15 million farmers in Ontario who cover more than five million acres of land.

But there's more to it. A province that can't feed itself is a province doomed to fail. Really, this isn't hard to see. It's a sad story all over the province of Ontario right now. We have families turning to food banks, turning to local charities to try to access food. We're talking about seniors and children here who don't have food.

With proper government assistance, we'll never need to worry about that in Ontario. As many of my colleagues have pointed out, we have a vibrant and innovative agricultural sector in all corners of this province, producing world-class food and products. If we work together, we can get this food to the people of Ontario who need it. We can do that by supporting our farmers.

Let me say this clearly: Agriculture insurance is a fundamental tool we can use to protect our farmers right here in Ontario. This bill we're debating today will allow for insurance to be offered to more producers in this province. This is an integral step to giving our agriculture sector the backing they need to be able to grow their businesses. With this kind of insurance, we can make sure that our farmers here in Ontario know that if something out of their control occurs, the government will be there to support them.

Mr. Speaker, we've got coverage for things like grain, fruit, vegetables and tobacco, and yet we have no coverage for things like beef and maple products. What has this meant? This has meant that when a freak weather occurrence happens, say, things like flash floods that destroy crops, the farmer has some sort of safety net so they don't lose their land or, worse, their business. Yet, things like PED in pork or BSE in beef, or when flash floods kill livestock—there's no insurance available. So if you happened to go into fruit farming, good for you, you're safe, but if you inherited a farm where your main product is beef, that's too bad. Just thinking about that is enough to make your head spin. These are jobs and job creators, and they should be treated with respect.

This isn't a new problem either. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been calling for this expansion of insurance since the early 2000s. Ontario lags behind other provinces in protecting these categories. This is a problem that has been brought up time and time again. Now more than ever, this sort of insurance is necessary.

It's not hard to see why. Climate change—something that I hear a lot from the other side—is greatly affecting our ability to grow crops comfortably across this province. As we see changes in temperature and in humidity, we see new insects entering into our environment where they have never been seen before. We start to see crops reacting differently to weather changes. These sorts of things put our farmers' businesses at risk.

We hear this government say that we are a leader in fighting climate change here in Ontario and that this Liberal government is a progressive government, yet, this has been happening for years, and our farmers are the ones who are unfairly taking on this burden.

These sorts of things are the exact same things that hurt our livestock farmers—those who produce meat, milk and cheese. With climate change occurring and unpredictable weather patterns, we start to see new insects and diseases affecting our livestock.

Many of you know that I have spoken in this House before about Lyme disease. It's spreading across this province because of climate change. As temperatures change, ticks are being found in places that you could never have found them before. They're biting people, and people are getting Lyme disease. This is happening so fast that our province is struggling to keep up with medical demands. I hope very soon that this government will properly confront Lyme disease from diagnosis to treatment. That's just one example of what's happening.

In certain cases there's protection for crops against these same sort of challenges, and yet with our livestock there is no protection. It makes absolutely no sense to give protection to one group of agricultural workers and not another. I'm glad there is an effort to fix this problem. I just sincerely hope it's acted upon sooner rather than later.

What they need to address this issue is strong insurance regulation—the kind of regulation that gives farmers the support they need and the confidence to do their work, the confidence to grow their businesses, to hire more workers and to put out more product. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't quite seem to do that.

Mr. Speaker, it's been clearly pointed out that this is an enabling bill. Our farmers and those working in the agricultural sector have needed this coverage for 10 years. The sentiment in this bill is one that New Democrats support, but this bill does not create anything; it just shows the intention to have insurance extended to areas where it isn't today. That's great—

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Pay attention—and we support the need for this legislation, but let's put in some solid plans to get it done.

There are some facts at play which worry New Democrats that this may be nothing more than an enabling bill. The Minister of Agriculture—who is here, by the way, listening, and I appreciate that. Thank you very much for being here.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, give him a hand. It's good. I think it's important that he's here. I think he should hear this.

1630

It's slated for around a 6% budget cut this year, according to the 2014 budget. Now, I know we're going to get a new budget in another month or so. This bill, if you read it, clearly says nothing concrete about funding. It doesn't say anything about funding—which is import-

ant to the farmers. Right now agriculture insurance is paid 40% by the farmers, which I'm sure you know, 36% by the federal government and 24% by the provincial government. That's all there is to it. If you just read the numbers, you can see why this is a concern.

This bill claims that there will be extended insurance coverage. Well, some of that has to come from the government; some of that insurance money has to come from the government. Yet there's nothing here to say where that money is coming from. I think that's important. If there are no new funding streams being introduced, then it would have to mean cuts from somewhere else. Of course, we can debate the merits of those cuts, but in order to do that we have to know what those cuts are going to be; if not, it becomes pretty clear that this is nice to say to the farmers but doesn't actually support our agricultural sector, which we're all trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, there's another important aspect to our local agriculture as well—and that's buying local. You can drive to my riding, to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the summertime and really experience what Ontario farmers can do. The fruit they grow down there is second to none—second to none. If somewhere else in the world made a better product, I could see them arguing that we should buy that, but when it comes to agriculture here in Ontario, we are the best. The tomatoes, the peaches, the strawberries, the corn: It's absolutely unreal how delicious our local food is. Honestly—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm hungry.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's good. You've got another eight minutes before you can go and eat.

But honestly—and I'm glad the MPPs are listening, because I invite every MPP here today to take some time in the summer and come down to my riding in Niagara. You can go to a market like Orchard Glen and get some of that fresh food for yourself. And—this is something that I know you'll all enjoy—you can drive the length of the Niagara Parkway, all the way from Fort Erie to Niagara-on-the-Lake, and you can stop at any one of the dozen local fruit stands. The drive is beautiful. Winston Churchill—anybody remember him?—called it the most beautiful Sunday drive in the world. While you're enjoying yourself there—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I never thought I'd hear you quote Winston Churchill, Gatesie.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I did. You have to quote him when he's right, and he's right about Niagara.

You can see for yourself why the products we're growing in Niagara are second to none. I'm proud to see this is catching on. You can go down to the farmers' markets in my riding, and they're absolutely packed in the summer. The Ridgeway market is an example. It's always busy with people. We've got just as many visitors as we do locals down there. They know that the food is fresh, they know it's delicious and they trust where it came from.

When we buy local, we support our local economy right here in Ontario. When we buy local, we know that our products are being held to a very high standard and

that they're going to be healthy for our families, which is important.

I'm happy to see that so many people in my riding take advantage of this. I wish we could see more of this right across the province. We need to support our agriculture industry just as much as this government needs to support this industry. We used to have the capacity to do it. In Niagara Falls—and I know a lot of people would probably remember this—the last canning company closed down: Del Monte. They were good-paying jobs. What happened in that situation—the federal government paid almost \$30 million to the farmers to tear out their peach trees, rip them right out of the ground. I know that's a federal issue, but again, I go back to what I said earlier in this speech: If you're a country or a province that can't feed yourself, you're going to be in trouble.

There is no way that we should have been tearing perfectly good peach trees out of the ground so that Del Monte could ship those same peaches in from China and Third World countries. It made absolutely no sense. This meant the loss of hundreds of jobs right here in Ontario. It's not hard to see the net benefit for Canada in making sure this industry is strong.

Interruption.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The speech is so good, the lights are going out.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing.

When we talk about spinoff jobs related to agriculture, this is what we mean. These are decent jobs for people. Ontario farmers were creating an Ontario product, canned and delivered right here in Ontario. With some of the cheaper products coming in, we've begun to lose this. But you go to the farmers' markets these days and you can see that that's beginning to turn around, and that's good news.

That's the sort of stuff that will be impacted by this bill. If we cover all of our agricultural products like we currently cover our crops, then those in the industry will have the confidence to begin operating again. When they start producing food, jobs start being created, and the development isn't hard to understand.

As you all know, I'm a big supporter of "buy local." I love to see people supporting their local farmers, the same way I love to see them supporting local contractors and local workers, like I mentioned here last week. That's how everyone can do their part. When it comes to this legislation, the government needs to do their part—

Interruption.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Am I good?

Interjection: Keep going.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Do you want me to keep going? Okay, I'm going to keep going, but I'm not going to use a cheap joke here and say, "Did you guys pay the hydro bill?" I'm not going to go there. I'm just going to continue on my speech. Is that okay, Mr. Speaker?

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, I invite every member to come back to my riding with me for a few days. While you're there, you'll be more than welcome to come with me to see the Niagara IceDogs play. You can show the importance of this Legislature.

Niagara is getting hit with one of the toughest winters we've ever seen. Luckily, it's beautiful in the winter. When you're down there, you can see the falls—some of which have briefly frozen over and look incredible—or tour the fantastic wineries, like the Ravine or Two Sisters wineries. We get thousands of tourists who come to Niagara Falls in the winter, who stay in our great hotels and visit our stores and, of course, support our local businesses. Thankfully, there is a lot to do in my riding in the winter. Nevertheless, it's cold.

During this time last year, I had just finished knocking on doors in my by-election. We were hearing then about how the unpredictable weather was affecting harvests. Grape growers were having their seasons affected by the length of the winters, that were particularly cold. Those who had insurance had the peace of mind to know that one bad year wouldn't completely ruin them and their businesses, but there are a number of people in this province who don't have the same peace of mind. As my colleague from Welland noted, some areas lost 50% of their buds last year. Crop insurance is one of the tools these farmers use to survive year after year.

Local students at Brock University have been working hard to try to fix the problem. Students in their courses have worked with leading researchers in helping to make grape crops sustainable during harsh winters. Before, vineyards might lose their entire ice wine harvest to bad weather. Today, because of our talented and brilliant young minds, they can save their harvests and continue to get our amazing Niagara wines into the LCBO.

1640

Of course, while we're on the topic of supporting our local agriculture, we should briefly mention supporting our local grape growers and wineries. This can be done easily, by expanding their shelf space at the LCBO. Instead of economic growth going to places outside of Canada, we can put that money back into businesses right here in the province. They can do this just by giving local wineries more space on the shelves of the LCBO. After all, shouldn't the province be supporting our local businesses? The point is, it shouldn't just be up to them to help the agriculture sector. Government needs to play a role as well when things out of the farmers' hands occur.

I spoke with a local beekeeper in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They tell me directly that when the winter is this long and this harsh, it affects them too. They can't feed the bees properly and the bees start to die. One hive can house as many as 50,000 bees in the springtime, and they're not cheap to replace. We start to hear that in Niagara people lose 10 to 50 hives, the entire bee population, over the course of the winter.

I still have a few pages left but I'll finish up. Thanks very much for my time and for listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Niagara Falls for casting additional light on the subject.

I now move over to questions and comments. I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Control—Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Climate control, yes.

I always thought, Mr. Speaker, that this was a conservation initiative, lowering the lights. It improves the esthetics in here; I've never seen you all look so beautiful.

I want to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's harassment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Coming from you, John—please.

I want to agree with my friend opposite: There are a lot of challenging dynamics here because the climate is changing in dramatic ways and there is a greater call for insurance.

I also want to address, Mr. Speaker, the idea of the importance of the relationships between urban and rural Ontario. Part of the reason we can do that is we have the biggest building boom going on right out those windows there, building a tax base, and it is that tax base growth that is so essential, because many small rural communities need infusion of capital. They don't have the property tax base or the commercial tax base to do that. If we don't realize the interdependence fiscally of large centres—we wouldn't have banking in Toronto if we didn't have mining in the north. We had mining banks. We wouldn't have a healthy financial sector here if we didn't have a strong rural Ontario.

This is the time where the insurance model of transferring wealth within the province is particularly important. So I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture and Food for his leadership here, because he's the first leader since 1996 to address this issue. It's been sitting around for the better part of two decades now, and I'm really pleased to see this happen.

I also just want to say a few things about—part of the competition in Niagara is that we have an exploding wine industry, and it is displacing a lot of our fruit production. Part of the reason Del Monte left is that we have more wineries down there, and wineries and grape-growing generate a lot more revenue. We have challenges right now.

Also, if you look at the numbers, and you look at the conversions from forage crops to soy and corn, we have a different profile now of food production, and that's going to be another important part of looking at food security going forward. It's very interesting to read the last couple of OFA reports on the food mix in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I want to commend the member from Niagara. I really appreciate the pride that exudes out of him with regards to the riding that he represents and I am so glad to hear him talk about the importance of buying local and supporting our farmers,

and the fact that he appreciates and values the fruit farming in his riding.

But some of his comments reminded me of the initiatives that OFA embarks upon. In 2013, they hosted a field day in late July at the farm of Phil Armstrong just north of town—just north of Brampton, actually. It was a really good initiative to talk about how crops are grown and the ins and outs of the dairy industry.

This past summer, in 2014, OFA was going to host a field day northeast of the GTHA, and I was really looking forward to it, Speaker. I grew up on a beef cash crop farm, I live on a meat goat and cash crop farm now, the rest of my in-laws are all dairy farmers, and I was really looking forward to this particular field day because it was on a fruit farm, and we were going to visit a market garden. I was really dismayed because the OFA had to cancel this field day because there weren't enough members interested in participating in that particular initiative. We all have to do our part in understanding the diverse agri-food industry in Ontario if we're going to properly represent it here in this chamber.

When we talk about making sure our farmers do not lose their land—and we have to be very sensitive to the type of insurance that our farmers in Ontario have—I have to say there's no insurance against industrial wind turbines for farmers. Currently, because of some big wind companies not being happy with particular farmers in my riding, they're going to try to bankrupt them with charges. It's not right, and we need to do better by them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting and, in parts, entertaining to listen to my colleague from Niagara Falls talk about Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

The bill has good intentions to cover more people in agriculture with insurance—not just crop insurance, but every other part of agriculture. But it is just that: intentions. We don't see how much money is being designated to this. We don't see exactly how this will be rolled out. Who will be in? Who will be out? It's still a big question mark. The intentions are good; the details are sparse. That was a point well made by my colleague.

There are lots of risks to being in agriculture. There is a huge amount of investment that needs to be done so that you can have the trailer, the tractor, the barns, all of the equipment that you need to farm and to be in agriculture. The risks are great, so insurance makes sense. But who will be in? Who will be out? There will always be, basically, risks associated with growing a crop.

My colleagues from before mentioned that the Sudbury racetrack no longer holds racing, which means that everybody who grew hay to feed those racehorses now has no buyers, which means severe financial hardship for about a hundred of them. There's no insurance for that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Scarborough Southwest is part of Toronto, so I'm a city member.

I really like people to speak and make some comments. The member from Niagara Falls, before I make some comments, I just want to share a small story with you and the members here.

When I was practising law, I was representing a client who just came from the Ukraine. We were talking in my office, and he said, "I want to go to Niagara-on-the-Lake." I said, "You mean Niagara Falls." "No, I want to go to Niagara-on-the-Lake." I said, "Okay, but you want to see Niagara Falls." "No, I want to see Niagara-on-the-Lake." So we went on a Sunday, and he said, "I want to buy some peaches." I learned a lesson. We bought a basket of peaches just picked that day. I can say in all truth that it was the tastiest peach I ever tasted in my life, right from his riding—not from China, not from any other country, but from Niagara-on-the-Lake. It was just off the tree, a couple of hours later. I've been back several times. The best peaches are right from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

The bill in front of us, Bill 40, provides insurance to cover other crops and allows the Minister of Agriculture, who's here today, and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change—it's important that he's here, too. I honestly believe there's going to be more and more climate change. It's going to affect the crops all over Ontario, especially in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where so much is grown, not just grapes, but so many other things as well.

1650

I agree with a lot of his comments and hopefully this bill will go to committee, we'll have a discussion and it will come back for final third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara Falls for his final comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their comments. I would like to say thanks to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of the Environment for being here today to hear this important topic.

I didn't get a chance to talk about a couple of things—I didn't get through all my notes—but I do want to talk a little bit about the horse racing industry. Because the reality is, in my hometown we've had a really tough time around the Fort Erie Race Track, trying to make sure that we have enough dates there. This year we're going to get an extra three dates. We're going to go from 36 dates to 39, but the reality is, if that's going to be a long-term business that's going to last for a long time and protect the 1,200 jobs here, we've got to get that up to 75 to 80 race dates. The only way we're going to be able to do that is through the slots program or through some form of betting. I've been talking about single-game betting. Although that's a federal issue, I think it's one that would help the Fort Erie Race Track in that particular area; it would also create some more jobs there.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is, the Premier talked about how she's challenging the agricultural sector to create 120,000 new jobs. I believe if you bring all-way GO service to Niagara, we can bite into that pretty quickly.

I want to say to the Minister of the Environment—he talked about how the wine industry is booming. You're absolutely right. Niagara-on-the-Lake is in the top 10 tourist areas in the entire province of Ontario. Some of that is not only the wine industry growing, but also the quality of the restaurants and some of the other stuff that people are coming down for.

But on the canning factory itself, when I talked about the federal government and pulling the peaches out of the ground, it wasn't a winery that went in its place; what went into it was development of homes, which really didn't make a lot of sense. So I want you to just understand where I was going on that.

Thank you very much for listening. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for Niagara Falls and all those who added to the debate.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of the bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Deputy government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The government wishes the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'm going to have the privilege of sharing my time with a couple of my colleagues, the members from Northumberland—Quinte West, the honourable Lou Rinaldi; Ottawa South, Mr. John Fraser; Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Mr. Peter Milczyn; and Ann Hoggarth, the member from Barrie.

Hon. Jeff Leal: What a lineup.

Mr. Grant Crack: It is a great lineup, Minister.

It's a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon and share my comments on Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014. As one of the members who previously spoke had indicated, any opportunity to speak about agriculture in this House is a great opportunity, and I couldn't agree more.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Jeff Leal, for introducing this excellent piece of legislation. Our government, since being elected in 2003, has been incredibly committed to the agricultural industry in the province of Ontario. That's why it continues to prosper, and we are going to continue to take those measures that are necessary to ensure its long-term viability in the province of Ontario.

There has been a lot of positive response from the members opposite with regard to this bill. I'm very, very pleased to hear that. It would be my preference to move this bill into committee as soon as possible, so that we could actually hear from stakeholders, but we're going to continue to debate it for a little bit longer. That's a welcome thing as well.

I must tell you that I was honoured when former Premier Dalton McGuinty gave me a call, shortly after

the 2011 elections. He said, "Grant, would you be interested in being the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs?" I was obviously honoured by the request that the Premier made of me and I accepted. Now that position is held by the member from Beaches—East York, Mr. Arthur Potts, and he is here in that role to ensure that we can bring the rural area and agriculture into the urban area as well.

My riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is predominantly agriculture. It's the main economic driver in our area. We have cash crops. We have dairy, eggs, poultry, pork—and goats as part of the dairy as well.

Ms. Soo Wong: Do you have sheep?

Mr. Grant Crack: We have Skotidakis. I just want to give a little plug in for Skotidakis—

Ms. Soo Wong: Sheep, sheep.

Mr. Grant Crack: We have sheep as well. But Skotidakis in St. Eugene—

Interjection: Beau's brewery. You've got Beau's brewery.

Mr. Grant Crack: We've got Beau's brewery as well.

I've had the opportunity to meet with the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, the Egg Farmers of Ontario and the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and develop some pretty strong relationships with them. But I can tell you that the great relationship that our government has with our stakeholders is part of the reason for the co-operation that we've had on some of the programs we've implemented, specifically the business risk management program that was designed by farmers for farmers. We took that and made it into a piece of legislation. We're moving forward and this is going to actually enhance some of the programs that we have in place as well.

But let me talk about le collège d'Alfred in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. Alfred College, as we well know, was under threat last year with the decision by the University of Guelph that they would be closing both the Alfred campus and Kemptville campus. But I can tell you that our government has worked hard. I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, as well as the minister responsible for francophone affairs and all of my colleagues for the support as we continue to work towards that long-term solution that is going to be necessary to ensure that francophones across this great province, and particularly in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, have the ability to have their education in agriculture in their language, which is, of course, French.

The united counties of Prescott-Russell—I know my time's almost up, but too bad, gentlemen and ladies. The united counties of Prescott-Russell just recently met with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at the ROMA/Good Roads conference. They reiterated how important the collège d'Alfred is to our region in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. They did the economic impact study. It was about \$12 million lost to the local economy

if Alfred College was to either relocate or close completely.

We're working very diligently with our community partners and with the various ministries involved, and we will continue to work to ensure that Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and all our farmers right across this great province of Ontario continue to prosper in the long term.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I turn it over to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is indeed a pleasure whenever I get the opportunity to talk about agriculture and rural Ontario.

Let me just be very clear. I'm not a farmer, but my house abuts a farm right behind me and I see the great work and the long hours that they work.

Let me also tell you my interest in agriculture and rural Ontario. When I first entered municipal politics, I had the privilege of being the reeve of what was then Brighton township, a totally rural community. I was able to put together a number of farmers to act as an advisory group to the township to help us, as municipal leaders, deal with issues.

When I got elected in 2003, provincially, if you would remember the price of some commodities like grains and oilseeds, frankly, they were tanked. We talked every day—calls from farmers, how they would survive. I then went back to my script book. I appointed an agricultural advisory group, not to talk about the low price of corn, but how could we move the yardsticks forward? We could talk about those things, but I was looking for solutions, and they were a great help.

Let me just go down a road that, frankly, I'm a little bit confused.

1700

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No, I'm going to go there, because what I'm confused about is that there is a party across that professes to call themselves champions of rural Ontario, champions of the farming community. So I'm confused: They stand here and tell us they support the bill, and then—so if you support it, let's get it to committee to try to refine it. That's what they're asking for, Speaker.

Same as the NDP. They want to support it. I think I heard it loud and fairly clear that they want to support this. So let's get it to the committee. Let's end this, go to committee and let's get it sorted out, because, frankly, I get calls from farmers in my community who want this. They have been asking for this. They want this to happen.

Interruption.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it happens to the best of us, so join the crowd.

To kind of wind this down, because I know my colleagues want to speak about this, I urge the members opposite—they say they support it—let's get to committee, because the farmers in my community want this done.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, on a point of order: Could you please clarify for me whether or not cell-phones are allowed in the chamber? I'm just curious.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That is not a point of order.

I will turn it back for further debate. I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act. I'd like to congratulate the minister on bringing this forward. As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change mentioned, nothing has been done since 1996. I'd like to congratulate him on his commitment to managing risks with our agricultural partners.

I know the minister is hard at work, because every morning, when I get to the gym, which is about 6 o'clock in the morning, he's already there and he's already working up a sweat. So I know he's out there working hard first thing in the morning. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West is often with him, so I'm sure the member is lobbying him.

I come from the community of Ottawa South, and we have no farms. We used to have one farm, but about 10 years ago that farm left. But I do come from a community—and the member from Nepean–Carleton would know—that is the capital city with the most farms of any capital city. It's a very big part of our community. I know she has many farms in her community. Of course, with our farmers' markets—

Hon. Jeff Leal: By Ward Market.

Mr. John Fraser: The By Ward Market. There's the market at Lansdowne Park right now. It's also the home of Canada's experimental farm, which really is still functioning, but is also a monument to agriculture being the base and the foundation of how we built this country.

Now, I spent 22 years in the grocery business, from a buyer of produce and fresh goods to managing stores. One of the issues that is very important to me is food security. In the last 10 or 15 years, we've started to talk about this a bit more.

It's important for us to have a robust agriculture sector to ensure that we have food security, because if you can't feed yourself, it's pretty hard to be productive. I think that the expansion of production insurance is an important step to support food security, and I congratulate the minister in bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to the Agriculture Insurance Act and to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture on his tremendous leadership on this file and every other file in his ministry.

Mr. Speaker, my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore does not have any farms in it, but I dare say that Etobicoke–Lakeshore has one of the most significant agri-food clusters of any community in this province. We have the Ontario Food Terminal there, which allows many farmers in Ontario to bring their products from the field to the table in an urban area. We also have very many major

food processors in my riding, like Campbell's soup. We have a number of producers that have chicken products. We have a number of other companies that produce the frozen foods that we all enjoy in our busy lives, because we can't always get home and cook fresh food. Much of that is made from Ontario produce.

It's very important that we have protection for our farmers, so that when they experience a bad year because of weather, or because prices are reduced because of some market situations, they can continue to be healthy and vibrant and continue producing food for us, because that supports so much of the rest of the economy of this province. There are so many tens of thousands of other jobs in Ontario that depend on our farmers being able to continually produce some of the best food in the world, which can be brought to our cities and to our communities for us to enjoy and eat, and also for us to add value to and create other products that we can then export.

When I read this and I see that this is going to bring Ontario on par with other provinces in the country, that it's going to create a level playing field for Ontario farmers, that's very important. I know that's part of the Premier's mandate and everything that she does. She wants Ontario to be a leader in this country and wants to make sure that Ontario and other provinces have a level playing field when it comes to all kinds of economic activities. So that's very important.

Also, in terms of the ability of the provincial government to be able to better forecast its expenditures, having a program in place that's premium-based and that's going to avoid some of the one-off, ad hoc programs that we sometimes have, to support our farmers and other agricultural producers, is very important also, in terms of managing the finances of the provincial government more effectively—having a system in place that's predictable and that is cost-shared with our partners in the agricultural sector.

I hope that all members in this House will support this bill. It's very important. I heard today that nothing has happened since 1996 on this file, which tells me that the previous government, during its entire tenure, did nothing. I'm very happy that under this government strong action is being taken. We have a Premier who understands rural Ontario and who understands agriculture, and we have a tremendous Minister of Agriculture right now who I know is working on this day in, day out.

Mr. Speaker, just to summarize, while this is a program to support the farmers in Ontario, this is also a program that's going to support thousands of other jobs in communities big and small throughout Ontario that depend on our farmers being able to deliver the best produce that they can to the markets throughout this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Although I've never lived on a farm, my ex-husband was raised on a farm. Also, my parents sort of thought I lived on a farm, because in my basement in the city I raised little chicks. We had

bunnies. We had everything there was, including—one Valentine's Day, my ex gave me a lamb, which I raised in the city, in the basement, until it kicked over the water heater, and I got it out of the basement before my father could come home. I love all kinds of animals.

The member from Niagara: I'd like to tell him how wonderful his area is. My family goes there regularly for the fresh fruits and vegetables and for the beautiful sights and scenes. My house is filled with Trisha Romance pictures, which I love a lot.

This bill is very important. It amends the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996, to expand the scope of the act. Currently, the act applies to agricultural crops and perennial plants. This bill would expand the act so that it would apply to all agricultural products that are designated by the ministers by regulation.

1710

Ontario made a commitment to expand production insurance beyond crops and perennial plants when the ministry signed the federal-provincial-territorial Growing Forward 2 agreement in 2013. Currently, production insurance covers grains and oilseeds, tree fruits and grapes, processing vegetables, fresh market vegetables, specialty crops and forage.

Over the long term, this act will allow the province the opportunity to consider strategies that include moving away from provincial-only support towards tools that attract federal funding. The proposed amendment has no immediate financial impact.

Approval of this request for enabling legislation will, if passed, align the province with the rest of Canada and enable Ontario to participate in innovative production insurance programs that are currently being explored in other parts of the country. Ontario's agriculture sector has huge potential for growth, and the Agriculture Insurance Act will, if passed, allow this growth to happen.

It's very important that we pass this act. I think we need to get it to committee, get looking at possible amendments and get it through committee so that it's passed as soon as possible to help out the farming communities and the agri-food businesses in Ontario.

The Premier and this government have made it very clear that we are very supportive of this very important business. I think the Premier made that clear when she became the minister before she was the Premier.

Also, I can't tell you how much I've learned, by being part of the rural caucus, about innovations in the agri-food industry, including a wonderful discovery or development made by a woman on a farm where she discovered a hop that grows—apparently, and I did not know this before I became a member, hops are very difficult to grow. She has developed a hop that is quite—

Interjection: Hardy

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: —dependable and hardy and has changed the level of business for farmers here in Ontario. It's used all over the world, I believe. There have been many other wonderful innovation awards given all over Ontario. I'm very happy to be part of this, and I urge everyone to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise today to debate agriculture in this fine assembly. I must say that the last 20 minutes, listening to the Liberal caucus speak about agriculture, had to be the most bizarre experience I have ever had, listening to people talk about farming and agriculture and rural Ontario, particularly from three members from Toronto, Barrie and more urban Ottawa than anything. In fact, let me say I thought the comments made by the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore were not only absent of reality, they were absolutely absent of truth. Let's be quite literal, Speaker. This is a member who said in—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure, I'll withdraw.

It's absolutely incredulous that this member would suggest that the previous Conservative administration did nothing, when the last time this legislation was implemented was during a Conservative government. They, however, have had now four mandates where they have done nothing.

But I'll tell you what they have done. They closed Kemptville College, the longest-running agricultural college in Canada. They destroyed the Ontario horse racing industry, and my friends from Windsor and my friends from Niagara are nodding their heads. They remember those 60,000 jobs in rural and agricultural Ontario.

This is a government that has exacerbated the rural-urban divide in this province. They have done it through their crazy policies like their wind turbine developments. They've done it, as I've said, with horse racing. They've done it with the canneries. Tim Hudak often stood up here, day in and day out during that initial crisis, talking about that. Of course, as I mentioned, the devastation we're facing in eastern Ontario over the closure of Kemptville College.

Speaker, I will not listen to this Liberal government talk to me and my constituents about agriculture. They know nothing, they see nothing, and unless they are destroying something, they do nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, I beg your indulgence to introduce two people who have been sitting here in the gallery. This is Nora Meszaros and Chris Alexander. They're both journalism students from Conestoga College. I wish to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ça m'a fait bien plaisir d'écouter le député de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell nous parler du collège d'Alfred. Le collège d'Alfred, c'est le collège d'agriculture francophone de l'Ontario depuis toujours. Il y a des générations et des générations d'agriculteurs en Ontario qui ont été formés dans le collège d'Alfred, et la survie du collège d'Alfred est encore en péril. Et ça, vraiment, c'est sous le règne du gouvernement libéral en place.

Pour les francophones, le collège d'Alfred, c'est des racines profondes. Ça fait partie de notre culture, de notre

agriculture. Ça fait partie d'un acquis de la francophonie ontarienne, et maintenant, vraiment, on ne sait pas exactement ce qui va se passer.

Le rapport qui a été mis de l'avant nous parle d'une structure corporative. Peu importe comment je le lis, je ne viens pas à bout de comprendre. Puis pour tant de structures corporatives—avec Ornge, j'en ai vu. Mais là, je lis ce que le gouvernement nous propose, puis je ne viens pas à bout de comprendre ça.

Oui, l'agriculture, c'est important, mais former les prochains agriculteurs qui vont travailler partout dans l'Ontario français, ça aussi est important. Puis pour faire ça, ça veut dire que le collège d'Alfred doit survivre. En ce moment, la survie du collège d'Alfred—moi, je n'en suis pas certaine du tout.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise in the House today on behalf of my constituents, not only in Cambridge but in North Dumfries township, where I reside, in rural Ontario, on Rural Route 4, in North Dumfries township. It brings me pleasure to be able to rise and speak to this wonderful bill today.

The member opposite from Nepean—Carleton suggests that those members on this side of the House today are not from rural Ontario, and I beg to correct the record, because I certainly live in rural Ontario.

Interestingly, every day when I'm at home, I pass by my neighbours' fields. We grow soybeans and corn, and we have mixed farming and cattle in my particular area. So I see each and every day the effects of weather, the effects of some of the events. I know when it's a good crop here. I know when crops have had some challenges. So I'm very happy today to stand up and really suggest that the Agriculture Insurance Act is going to be very good for my area.

My next-door neighbours grow cattle and grains in their fields. She's also the driver of our local school bus. We talk very regularly about the issues in farming and in rural Ontario. They're very happy to know that this government is going to be bringing forth some relief for them when weather events and other issues are out there for farmers.

I know that Ontario is committed to helping its agri-food partners manage the risk. I know very well that our producers, our growers, who actually sell their wares in our local Cambridge market—one of the oldest operating markets in Ontario—are very happy to know that we'll be helping them to manage risk with insurance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd just like to start off by saying that I certainly support expanding and streamlining crop insurance programs, and changing provincial purchasing policies so Ontario produce is on the menu at schools and hospitals. This brings our farmers in line with the rest of the country, where farmers have long enjoyed this level of protection from their provincial governments. I'm pleased to see that they're looking at some of these programs, but I do have to bring up the concern of AgriCorp.

1720

In my riding, I have one specific farmer who had an overpayment of \$75,000 clawed back. He was one of 4,500 that actually got funds and had them clawed back with no understanding that there was ever going to be a repayment. It has created a lot of challenges for those farmers in my backyard, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to echo the comment made by my colleague from Nepean-Carleton: The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore made a comment that nothing has happened since 1996. Well, they've had 12 years—four mandates—to do a lot of things, a lot of good things, if they truly cared about agriculture and wanted to do that.

But I'm going to bring up a couple things that they've done over their tenure, Mr. Speaker. They've decimated the horse racing industry, which my colleague from Simcoe North brought up in his remarks—60,000 jobs which were supposed to be an enhancement to an industry. As we've heard in this House, they've closed Kemptville College. They've taken abattoirs virtually right out of the province. A lot of producers, a lot of people, have been impacted by that negativity.

They are the government that implemented the Green Energy Act out in rural Ontario, which has decimated, again, a lot of our manufacturing sector and is making it extremely difficult for our farming community, our agricultural producers, to remain competitive in our own backyard, Mr. Speaker. That cost is one borne by all of us, and it's something that, again, this government has to step up and take onus for.

I'm pleased to see the minister's trying to address some things, expanding some of the insurance. I certainly want to just caution that Agricorp has not always been good at getting those programs right. I hope that when he's doing it he's going to implement it and ensure that we have a strong, productive system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Ottawa South for final comments.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Cambridge and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for their contribution to the debate. It's clear that they're interested in agriculture and farmers and talking about this act.

I would like to address the comments made by the member from Nepean-Carleton, and suggest to her that all of us in this House have a mutual shared responsibility for agriculture in Ontario. It's not exclusively one party or another's.

I would like to point out that in describing my riding, she called it an "urban riding." Well, I represent a lot of people who came from farming communities and who depend on farming communities. I spent 22 years working in the grocery business. I understand food. I understand how hard farmers work. I understand the risks to our economy if we don't have a stable food supply. I really take great umbrage at that comment. I don't think that it's useful in debate. It's divisive. It's suggesting that people from urban ridings can't possibly understand where farmers are coming from, which is totally false.

Many, many people who live in members' ridings—on either side of this House—in urban ridings understand farmers because they came from farming communities.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's healthy to have good debate. I didn't agree with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, but I do appreciate his comments because they were made in the spirit of trying to get something done in this House and a difference of opinion, not dividing people and pointing fingers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon for a few moments to speak to Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

We all know how vital the agriculture industry is to Ontario. With more rural members than any other party, the PC caucus knows that at first hand and better than other parties in this House, I think.

As you know, this bill will allow crop insurance to be expanded to cover livestock. Livestock insurance is long overdue. If passed, this bill will allow farmers who choose to pay insurance premiums to tap into the larger pool of funds to compensate for the loss of their livestock.

However, this bill is not perfect. This bill does not actually create these programs; instead it allows them to be created by regulation. If this bill passes, it's important that the minister implement these programs swiftly.

Not only does the minister control the timing of these programs, but he controls which commodities will be eligible. I would encourage the minister to make sure that he does not pick and choose only a few commodities to be eligible for the programs. If cows are included, but sheep are not, we may see farmers abandon sheep altogether. Not only should the main commodities like sheep, hogs and cows be included in the program; this is an opportunity to extend the program to some lesser-farmed commodities like exotic animals or smaller birds like quails and pheasants.

I encourage the minister to be open and listen to all commodity groups who may wish to be included. Which groups will be included is just one of the many questions left to be answered.

Another important question is, what constitutes a death? Will the program cover animals that are killed by coyotes or predators? Will it cover animals that die of natural causes? Will it cover stillbirths or animals that have to be put down because of serious injury? These are important questions which we hope will be answered soon.

For anyone who has ever been around sheep, they know that sheep, unfortunately, die easily. Sheep have been known to suffocate in the snow or even to eat themselves to death. One farmer in my riding joked: "The easiest part of a sheep's life is its death." These are all things that the average member of this House wouldn't necessarily find out on their own, so it's very important to make sure we listen to farmers when deciding what commodities will qualify.

I think that everyone in this chamber can agree; it's ironic that when one of the Premier's loyal flock leaves this job, they get a severance, but when a farmer loses a sheep, they get nothing.

Another question that requires serious attention from the minister concerns the value of each animal. Breeding animals are commonly valued higher than non-breeding animals. We have all heard of prized racing horses used for breeding, but the same goes for cows and hogs.

I'd like to bring up an example of this very important problem. In my riding of Simcoe-Grey, John and Marie Miller own a very unique dairy farm just outside of Creemore. The Millers' dairy farm is not just a farm; it's also a micro-dairy where they produce and sell their own dairy products. The Millers ship their products across the province, and I am happy to have met with them just a few months ago to talk about how they can expand into big box grocery stores.

What makes the Millers' farm so unique is their use of Jersey cows, which make up only 4% of dairy cows in Ontario. Jersey cows give their milk products a distinct taste that is difficult to replicate. The Millers are the perfect example of the questions surrounding this bill. In the unfortunate event of the loss of one of the Millers' unique Jersey cows, would John and Marie be paid more than if they lost a more common Holstein? These are questions which cannot be answered without the input and expertise of the many important agricultural groups across this province. The minister must consult with these groups before making decisions that will affect the livelihood of farmers in both Simcoe-Grey and throughout Ontario.

Speaking of the province's agricultural groups, I'd like to talk briefly about some of those groups. I don't know if my constituents would let me speak about farming without mentioning the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, with which I've had a 25-year history of good relations. I'd like to take this time to congratulate the OFA's Don McCabe on his recent election as president and thank former president Mark Wales for all his work over the years. I'd also like to congratulate my good friend and constituent Keith Currie on his election as the OFA's vice-president. Keith and I have known each other for many years, and I'm happy to have such a strong advocate for Ontario's farmers within the borders of my riding.

When we asked Keith for his thoughts on the bill that we're debating today, he said, rather bluntly and accurately: "If you have livestock, you have dead stock." I think it's important to remember: No matter how good a farmer is at their job, there will always be circumstances outside of their control. Be it natural disasters, wild animals or natural causes, farmers are faced with the difficult challenge of keeping their livestock healthy. They spend countless hours and much money caring for their animals. The government should be there to help them when these unfortunate circumstances occur.

For years, this province has recognized the economic impact of the unexpected loss of crops, but we have yet

to realize the same cost that comes with the loss of livestock. But it's not just the OFA that should be consulted. The province has many key agricultural groups with thousands of members who have dedicated their lives to farming, be it the Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Pork or the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, to name a few. These organizations know their commodity groups better than anyone—yes, even better than the minister—and should be consulted as much as possible.

I was pleased to meet with many of these groups at the plowing match this year, which was held in my riding, in the beautiful village of Ivy. When the member for Haldimand-Norfolk—our party's critic for agriculture—Toby Barrett, and I met with these groups, they brought up this very issue. In particular, Ontario Pork was very vocal about the need to create a mortality insurance program for livestock.

1730

As many of you know, Ontario's pork industry was hit hard in the last year. The PED virus came to Ontario, including my home area of Simcoe county. The virus has nearly 100% mortality rate for piglets and young hogs. That type of death rate is devastating to a farmer both emotionally and financially, to say the least.

With that said, I'll just wind up by saying it's about time the government step up and be there for our farmers when they need us most. Ontario farmers need us to pass this bill, and they need us to do it quickly. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to support Bill 40. It's long overdue. I just want to say to the government, which says that we don't have a right to speak on this bill, that we're holding it up—that isn't true. Farmers need to be heard. On this side of the House, we're very much in touch with farmers and the rural community.

I just remind you—because you've been saying this on other pieces of legislation and during question period, when we bring up the bribery allegations in the Sudbury by-election—that we need to get to work on other things. Well, you've got five committees of this Legislature essentially closed. Five of—what do we have? Seven standing committees?

Interjection: Nine.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Nine. So over half of the committees are closed; they're not working. As you know, Mr. Speaker, much of the work that needs to be done is work that needs to be done—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I was hoping to come into the House to enjoy a productive debate about this bill, and we seem to have swayed off the bill, per the standing orders. May I suggest that adherence to the bill be followed. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. In my opinion, the member was addressing the bill.

Back to the member: Please continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good ruling, because I was referring to comments—disturbing comments—made by members of the government side. Any time you say that we're not working on issues that are important to people of Ontario, I'll just remind you that you've got this place more than half shut down. Shame on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I suppose that if Minister Leal had a farm, E-I-E-I-O, the government would be spending more time talking about farmers and their trials and tribulations, and they'd have fewer IOUs.

It is interesting that this bill is in front of us—overdue. I think it should be supported. I think when the member from Ottawa South was talking about how everybody in the House has some kind of a farm connection—I know if I wasn't jigging squid or cod in Newfoundland with my grandfather, some of my favourite summer vacations were spent in New Brunswick, in the hayfields of my friends and neighbours. Spending time on the farm I thought was good for growing up, good for life's experiences, and certainly can help prepare you for when you come here.

Earlier, I talked about the collapse of the harness racing industry in Essex county. I know back when my brother-in-law was a groom and a trainer and an owner of horses, my kids, when they were younger, would go to the barns and clean out the manure from the stables and get to know what harness racing was all about. I remember my brother-in-law one time had a goat, Jack the goat, because if a horse went off its feed, the goat would go into the stall and the horse would see its feed going somewhere else. He'd get hungry again and start eating.

In fact, the CBC did a story one time on Jack the goat, because every day at 3 o'clock, when *As the World Turns* or one of those soap operas came on and the theme music came on in the TV in the barn, no matter where that goat was in the barn, Jack would come running, watch that soap opera until the theme music faded away, and then he'd go back and cause—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Jack the goat. He was on Wayne Rostad's program on the CBC.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the Minister of Children and Youth Services and minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to speak to the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act, 1996. I'm always interested in these kinds of bills from a business point of view. What's the real impact? What does it mean for this sector?

I'm learning a lot studying this bill, including that Ontario generated \$12.1 billion in farm cash receipts, or 22% of Canada's farm cash receipts. But there's a recognition, too, that the agricultural markets are volatile, and these fluctuations are why it's very important to have effective business risk management programs in place. Expanding the ability to offer production insurance to more ag commodities is indeed helpful.

I think there's a question about what do we put in place for farmers experiencing difficulties. My understanding is producers who are facing financial hardship are encouraged to contact the ministry to discuss some options, to look at the individual circumstances.

Ontario is committed to partnering and cost-sharing in a national set of business risk management programs. When we do, we understand the programs will be reviewed by our provincial and federal funding partners to ensure they meet the needs of producers. We want to make sure, and I'm confident that Ontario will be an active leader at the federal-provincial table, making sure that we do understand those impacts on our producers.

We know that many of these producers make up what I call the majority of businesses in Ontario. Small- to medium-sized businesses of this nature do drive our economy. I think that these considerations I've touched on are very important to this bill going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to comment on the speech earlier today by our leader, Jim Wilson, here in the House. He talked an awful lot about Bill 40. We are supporting the bill, but our members do want to have the opportunity to speak for farmers in our ridings as well. I hope that I'll have a chance; I only have two minutes here with the rules under this circumstance, but I hope I get that opportunity to speak on behalf of the farmers in my riding.

I did want to comment on the reaction of the government when my leader, Jim Wilson, talked about how they are basically shutting down committees of this Legislature. Immediately, the minister jumped up on a point of order because, you see, it hurts them to hear the truth. They're hoping that the world out there is not listening, but we're telling you, folks, they're not letting bills get through committee—and then they say that the opposition is holding up the business of the Legislature. My goodness gracious. Here we have an opportunity to get the words on the record—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —and they're shutting our leader down.

But anyway, back to Bill 40—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. I've asked for order. I'll start naming you if it continues.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor. Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the way you brought order to this place, and I hope it stays throughout the few moments I have left—not left in this world; just left in this speech.

In the few moments I have left, I just want to say that we are supportive of the bill. There are some good things in here for farmers and it's about time, because as I heard from the member from Ottawa South, there's been

nothing done since 1996, which was the previous provincial government. They've been here for almost 12 years and nothing's been done. I'm quoting the member from Ottawa South when I say that: After 12 years, nothing has been done. Well, it's time to get something done, I say to my friends on the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm going to follow up on the same line that my colleague from Nipissing—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Are you sure you want to do that?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, I absolutely do—Renfrew-Nipissing, because I heard the government bemoan the fact that we want to continue to debate this important issue. They want to shut it down after six and a half hours of debate. That's the signal that you're sending out to rural Ontario, to those who work in the agricultural community: "Let's shut it down. This is only worthy of six and a half hours of debate. Let's move it along," after 12 years of having done really, absolutely nothing.

1740

But I don't fault you that much. I know that successive federal governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have failed you at the federal level. We saw failures within the NISA program, we saw failures within CAIS, we saw failures within AgriStability—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, there were lots of problems with those two as well. They never adequately addressed the issues of trade implications, of commodities, fluctuations of all the different factors that have led to a degradation of rural Ontario and agriculture production in Canada.

You don't get it, I don't think you get it, because you don't really emphasize food security, food sovereignty and food production. This is easy stuff. Go and find out. Go speak to those in rural Ontario in the agricultural sectors. They will tell you what they need.

This bill is enabling legislation; it's not prescriptive, it does not lay out any type of policy, and it definitely doesn't lay out any type of financial allocation to these various commodities that are going to be brought under the fold. These are important questions to ask. I hope the government and specifically the minister is listening, because there are a tremendous amount of questions that are still out there.

We appreciate having a full debate in this House. I would hope that the government would appreciate the questions that the opposition are putting forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First, let me say, in full disclosure, I am a proudly urban member from downtown Toronto—lived there all my life but for two years when I was in the wonderful riding of Huron—Bruce, and I'm going to talk about that in a minute.

To my colleagues to the right I want to say a couple of things. No party can speak for our agricultural base, for

our farmers. We all have roots. In fact, the New Democratic Party, coming out of the CCF, came from farmers on the prairies: Tommy Douglas, a Baptist minister from the prairies, spoke for farmers and farmer co-operatives; J.S. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister, came from the farming community, spoke for farmers on the prairies; Agnes Macphail, came up through the farmers party, spoke for farmers in a progressive way—that is the history of Canada. Those are the roots of the CCF-NDP. Those were not only progressive roots, they were radical roots, because they spoke for a community—I don't even have to segue into the Winnipeg general strike—that had deep needs, that were, in fact, suffering. They were hungry. That is where Medicare came from. It came from rural communities. Those are the communities that birthed it. So to say that farmers are inherently conservative is absolutely wrong. Let's just put that in the record.

Second of all, I have to say—and this was brought to my attention—that nowhere in this debate has been mentioned the 120,000 migrant workers who work on farms, so I want to give them a shout-out as well, because those are also a community—a community that are hard-pressed, a community that don't have the rights they should have. So let's just put that on the record as well.

Now, I've got seven minutes and 43 seconds left to talk about my two years in Huron—Bruce. So picture me, the first female United Church minister sent to the town of Brucefield-Kippen. They'd never had a woman before as their minister. They had never had anyone with a last name like DiNovo, because all of the names I encountered in Huron—Bruce were—let's say it—WASP last names.

One of the first things I did there was introduce taking communion by intinction, as it's called, which they immediately thought was somehow strangely Roman Catholic—because there are Protestant towns and Catholic towns; we all know this about the rural area around there. So I had some work to do. They also had never welcomed somebody who was an exponent, who was an activist, around LGBTQ issues. They welcomed me there even so.

When I went, I was a vegetarian. They welcomed me with a beef barbeque, and I ate the beef. Why? Because I did not want my two years of ministry there to be about food. It was one of many lessons that they offered me.

You will never find a better community than the community of Huron—Bruce and Brucefield-Kippen—phenomenal people. But the only thing we had in common when I got there was English. We spoke the same language. For an urbanite like myself who grew up in the city of Toronto downtown, lived in New York, lived in the Beach, lived in the west end, lived in the Annex, but had never experienced rural life, it was a real eye-opener. I think it's important to talk about that, because that was my agricultural literacy education.

What did they teach me? Well, a couple of serious lessons, and I think they're incredibly important ethical agricultural lessons.

One of the things they taught me out there was about money: the value of money and not the value of money.

They worked so hard. Farmers work so hard, especially—animal farmers work all year round. My cash crop farmers worked, of course, putting in the harvest, taking out the harvest. Everybody worked really hard all year long.

They sat on these vast tracts of land—because quite frankly, Speaker, you need vast tracts of land now to make a living in agriculture in Ontario. So I said to them, “You know, a downtowner like me would sell off their acreage, buy a BMW, head down to Florida and sit on the beach for the next 20 years,” because they had that much money in equity. I remember in my Bible study class, there was a group of women who were in their eighties—beautiful, wonderful women. They turned to me and they said, “But then what would we do?” That kind of work ethic, that kind of understanding that human beings are not put on this earth to sit on a beach in Florida and drive BMWs, but are actually put on this earth—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I just would care to remind the member that we are addressing the crop insurance bill. I would ask that you get to the point, because you only have about four minutes of your 10. Thank you.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I’m talking about the best agricultural insurance there is, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would remind the member from Eglinton—Lawrence that when I’m standing, I would appreciate quietness so that others can hear what I have to say. I have made a decision.

Again, I would turn it back over to the member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Agricultural insurance? Yes. This bill is an enabling bill. Should it go farther? Absolutely. It doesn’t really do anything. Okay, there you go. That’s the bill, Bill 40.

But the real agricultural insurance are the people who work the land. That’s who I’m talking about. I’m talking about that group of 80-something women who said that their real purpose in life was to actually keep that land going, to keep producing food for the next generation and to keep producing jobs for their family and their family’s family. They had been on the land for three or four or five generations already. That’s who I’m talking about. That’s the real insurance that keeps our agriculture going. Those were the women who taught me something about the value of money versus the value of land and the value of hard work. That’s number one.

Number two, they taught me about relationship, the other insurance that goes into the agricultural community. Quite frankly, while I was there as a minister, just like everywhere else in the world, there were difficulties in families. Some of those families didn’t have marriages that worked out, and as a pastor you’re used to that. You deal with that, right? But what was really interesting to me was that in the city, when two people get a divorce or separate, they’re gone. They do not come back to the same church every Sunday. They do not take part in the

same events all the time. They distance themselves, whereas in rural Ontario, in Brucefield-Kippen, people who had gone through that kept coming back to the same church, kept attending the same events. It was amazing.

1750

I asked them, “Why? Why do you do this?” They said, “Because we have to live together for the next three or four generations. We may not keep our marriage together, but we must maintain community and friendship.” That was a phenomenal lesson in agriculture and the difference between rural and urban. I was impressed, and I saw that as real agricultural insurance. It’s that bond of community, it’s that bond between people, that even if you get separated, even if you have your differences, you’ve got to work together, you’ve got to live together and ride it out. You’ve got to make things work. That’s agricultural insurance.

What else did I learn? I learned this, Mr. Speaker; I learned it very quickly—I’ve only got a minute left. There was a bird that got into my bedroom in the manse next to the church, and I didn’t know what to do. I opened the window and the bird didn’t go out, so I called my farmer neighbour and I said, “What do I do?” He came over with a tennis racquet and he went “Whack!” The bird was dead; that was it.

As a city-dweller, I felt a little guilty.

Mr. Mike Colle: You should have opened the window and let the bird out.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I did, I tried, but the bird wouldn’t go. So I felt a little guilty.

All I can say—I’ve got 39 seconds left—is, number one, I would suggest to anybody in an urban reality, spend some time in the country. Learn the differences, because there are—they’re dramatic. The second thing I’ll say is that if this agriculture insurance bill actually wants to have some teeth, it actually has to do what it says it will do, because Ontario is the only province that does not allow production insurance for a broad range of agricultural products.

With that, I’ll stop; I’ll sit down. Let’s hear it for Huron—Bruce.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions or comments? The minister of sport, culture and recreation.

Hon. Michael Coteau: That’s close enough, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I’d like to thank the member from Parkdale for her comments and her story about whacking those birds back in her younger days. But I want to talk about this incredible bill, the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014, and talk about this government’s commitment to working with the agricultural sector here in the province of Ontario. As members know, in this House in the last session we had the Local Food Act, which I was so proud of.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Yes, let’s give ourselves a big round of applause, because I think that was an incredible piece of legislation—and the risk management program that took place well before I got here.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the agricultural sector here in Ontario. Like the member from Parkdale, I grew up in an urban setting, but I had the opportunity as a young man to go and visit my grandfather in Grenada who's a farmer—a very different type of farming. But the thing that connects farmers all around the world is that they're hard-working and they're the backbone of any country. We need to make sure that when we put forward legislation like this, it's there to protect our farmers.

I believe without a question that we need to make sure that the agricultural sector here in the province of Ontario is set up so it can continue to be successful. It's a \$34-billion sector. I believe that as the planet expands in population, Canada, and most importantly Ontario, is going to have such a large role when it comes to food development, not only to feed people across this country, but around the world. I see it as a huge economic benefit to this province, a huge economic benefit to the country.

We need to protect our farmers so that if they get into this type of business that's so unpredictable—you know, weather changes, patterns can change—

Interjection: Climate change.

Hon. Michael Coteau:—climate change—unexpected things happen all the time. We need to make sure that government partners with our agricultural sector to ensure that they're set up for success.

I want to thank the minister responsible for this file for his extraordinary work in agriculture. I hope that every single member in this Legislature works with us to support our farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments or questions?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm really appreciative of the opportunity to stand up and remark on the member from Parkdale—sorry—

Interjection: High Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:—High Park. With that, the Kippen-Brucefield area in my riding is right within the bread basket, if you will, of Ontario's west coast. It's a huge cash crop area, but unfortunately, there's another crop that's springing up everywhere that has no insurance to negate the negative impacts. That crop is industrial wind turbines.

Speaker, it's a travesty what's happening in that area that the member so fondly remembers. If she were to come into that area today, I'm quite positive she wouldn't even recognize it. She'd be appalled at the manner in which unwilling communities have been absolutely annihilated with this development.

This bill, Bill 40, is about crop insurance. The member recognized the value of land and the value of relationships. It's interesting, because the growth of industrial wind turbines in my riding has negatively impacted the value of land and the value of relationships. Again, if she were to come into the area now—it's a travesty.

What makes it worse is we've had four families in my riding who are farmers, who are out on the land, day in and day out, and in their barns caring for their animals—unfortunately, because they chose to stand up and fight

against a failed green energy scheme that has totally destroyed their communities, we have wind companies billing them charges for standing up for the rest of Ontario. Crop insurance won't cover the \$340,000 that these four families are subjected to because of a failed green energy scheme. It is disgraceful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on my colleague the member from Parkdale—High Park's comments. She of course understands the importance of rural Ontario to the entire province. Coming from downtown Toronto here, she knows the connectivity that we all have, and also referenced our party's deep history when it comes to acknowledging and working alongside those partners in agriculture.

I had the good fortune of meeting with our local president of the Essex County Federation of Agriculture along with my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh. We met with Lyle Hall—big shout-out to Lyle Hall and to all the folks at the Essex County Federation of Agriculture; they do great work. Lyle gave us an article from the Ontario Farmer dated January 20 that says that Ontario is shorting rural municipalities. It references the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund, which was decreased by \$10 million in 2013, \$25 million in 2014, with an additional \$35 million in 2015, making the cumulative savings over three years \$115 million. I don't think those add up, but it is 35% that will be cut out. That's a large hit.

There is a fear that maybe even the business risk management program or the crop insurance program could suffer the same fate. There's nothing that mitigates against the government reducing the payout under the crop insurance or the agriculture insurance program. Even though they're going to bring in new commodities, the most important component of this bill and of the bill that you bring forward to enable yourselves to bring them in will be the dollar amount attached. It has to be significant. It has to be substantial. It will send a signal to the agricultural community that you actually are ready to partner with them and protect them should the industry suffer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions or comments?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm happy to stand here today in support of Bill 40 in response to some comments from my colleague across, the member from Parkdale—High Park—a very hard-working member, if I may add.

I grew up in Windsor, Ontario, although I'm now the member from Burlington. Windsor, as the members opposite may know, is in Essex county, or the breadbasket of Canada. So I'm well acquainted with the importance of our agricultural producers, as are so many members on this side of the House, of course. They are of the utmost importance to our food security and strong contributors to our economy, so it's our responsibility to do what we can to protect them and their livelihood. Allowing them to have affordable insurance coverage, which is what this

bill will do, for the fruits of their labour goes a long way and is a critical component to ensuring the viability of this sector of our economy.

Last year, we had an extreme weather event in Burlington. We had a flood. We had 200 millimetres of rain in a matter of five hours. We can just imagine what that would do to devastate some of our agricultural producers, had this been the case. They could lose an entire year's crop and subsequent income in a matter of hours. A premium-based insurance, where the government shares the cost with producers and helps to spread the risk between both parties, is something important which, over time, will help lower the overall associated costs.

So it's not just the producers themselves, though, who are important in this conversation; it's the tertiary industry. In my riding of Burlington we have food processors and we have packagers, and they're going to be impacted too—people like the Ippolito Group and EarthFresh Foods, incredibly important job creators, important in our food security conversation. We need to think about them, too.

I'd like to thank my colleague the Minister of Agriculture for his hard work on this legislation and urge all members of this House to support Bill 40.

Climate change is another issue which is impacting all of us, and we need to be sure to give our farmers the tools that they need to protect their livelihood and our food security.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Parkdale–High Park for final comments.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to everyone who weighed in on the debate. A couple of things I didn't get a chance to say: One is to give a real shout-out to the West End Food Co-op and the Sorauren Farmers' Market, a phenomenal endeavour. We see this all across our city: farmers coming into the downtown core, selling

their produce directly, co-ops springing up. It's a wonderful way for urban people to know what agriculture is all about and to actually speak to farmers first-hand.

To all the co-ops and all the farmers' markets out there—particularly, of course, my own Sorauren Farmers' Market and the West End Food Co-op—a shout-out for them.

I want to particularly, of course, highlight the member from Essex's comment, because absolutely, if there is not money behind this initiative, then really there is no initiative. In terms of insurance for our farmers, our agricultural producers, yes, they do need money. They need money behind any program that's going to protect them. That is critical.

Finally, another name that I didn't mention—and I think it's really important for my Roman Catholic friends in the room who talk about liberation theology, again going back to our farmers. Is rural Canada inherently conservative? No, it is not. Liberation theology came out of rural Canada. It came out of a man named Ben Smillie on the prairies, not from Central and South America, as is commonly thought, and Oscar Romero, great as he was. It came out of our own Canadian experience and it came out of our own agricultural experience. That merging of faith and social justice is the very roots of our party and the very roots of our country. I think we have to acknowledge that because I think we've gone away from that, both here and south of the border.

So here's to the radical and here's to the social justice farmers, because they're there. We know they are. They were the birth of our party. They were the birth of all progress in this country. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing as the time for debate has now expired, this Legislature will adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliot, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jenniffer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Concurrence in supply	
Motions agreed to.....	2554

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Children's aid societies	
Mr. Jim McDonnell.....	2554
Leading Women, Leading Girls, Building Communities awards	
Ms. Cindy Forster.....	2555
Model Parliament	
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	2555
Government accountability	
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	2555
Ontario Northland Transportation Commission	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	2555
Bruyère Continuing Care / Soins continus Bruyère	
Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde.....	2556
McCamus Maple Syrup	
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	2556
Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	2556
Model Parliament	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	2557
Private members' public business	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2557

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2557
Report deemed adopted.....	2557
Standing Committee on Estimates	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2557
Report deemed received.....	2557

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act, 2015, Bill 70, Mr. Rinaldi / Loi de 2015 sur la protection des régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite, projet de loi 70, M. Rinaldi	
First reading agreed to.....	2557
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	2557

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week	
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	2557
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	2558
Mr. John Vanthof.....	2559

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Water fluoridation	
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	2559
Student assistance	
Mme France Gélinas.....	2560
Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder	
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	2560
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2560
Dog ownership	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	2561
Immigration policy	
Ms. Soo Wong.....	2561
Wind turbines	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2561
First responders	
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	2561
Employment practices	
Mr. Arthur Potts.....	2561
Alzheimer's disease	
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2562
Workplace safety	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	2562
Water fluoridation	
Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	2562

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2015, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2015 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	2563
Mr. Taras Natyshak.....	2566
Mr. Bob Delaney.....	2566
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2566
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	2567
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	2567
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	2567
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	2570

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2570
Mme France Gélinas.....	2571
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	2571
Mr. Wayne Gates.....	2571
Mr. Grant Crack.....	2572
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	2573
Mr. John Fraser.....	2573
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	2573
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2574
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	2575
Mme France Gélinas.....	2575
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2575
Mr. Bill Walker.....	2575
Mr. John Fraser.....	2576
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	2576
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2578
Hon. Tracy MacCharles.....	2578
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	2578
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2579
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2579
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	2580
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson.....	2581
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2581
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	2581
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	2582
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	2582

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 3 March 2015 / Mardi 3 mars 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015, Bill 45,

Ms. Damerla / Loi de 2015 pour des choix plus sains, projet de loi 45, Mme Damerla

Mme France Gélinas	2533
Hon. Dipika Damerla	2540
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2540
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2541
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	2541
Mme France Gélinas	2541
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2542

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2542
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2542
Mr. Randy Hillier	2542
Mr. Michael Mantha	2542
Ms. Soo Wong	2542
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2542
Mr. Bob Delaney	2542
Hon. Dipika Damerla	2542
Mr. Paul Miller	2542
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2542

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jeff Yurek	2542
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2542
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2543

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Sylvia Jones	2543
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2543
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2544

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2544
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2544

By-election in Sudbury

Ms. Andrea Horwath	2544
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2544

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	2545
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2545

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2545
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2546

Home warranty program

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	2546
Hon. David Oraziotti	2546

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Victor Fedeli	2547
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2547

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2547
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2547

Automotive industry

Ms. Eleanor McMahon	2547
Hon. Brad Duguid	2548

By-election in Sudbury

Mrs. Julia Munro	2548
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2548

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Paul Miller	2549
Hon. Michael Coteau	2549

Violence against aboriginal women

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2549
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2549
Hon. David Zimmer	2550

Government accountability

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2550
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2550

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2550
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2550
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2551

Tobacco control

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	2551
Hon. Dipika Damerla	2551

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Bill Walker	2551
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2551

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2552
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2552

Greenbelt

Mr. Granville Anderson	2552
Hon. Ted McMeekin	2553

Continued on inside back cover

C426N
X1
D23



No. 52

N° 52

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 4 March 2015

Mercredi 4 mars 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 mars 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGRICULTURE INSURANCE ACT (AMENDING THE CROP INSURANCE ACT, 1996), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ASSURANCE AGRICOLE (MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1996 SUR L'ASSURANCE-RÉCOLTE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte (Ontario) et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm just checking to see if we have a quorum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have a quorum?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to speak to the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014. The background or the premise of the act is that Ontario is committed to helping its agri-food partners manage risk. Managing risk in agribusiness is a hugely complicated matter. Damage often arises without notice, given all sorts of factors that the province and the country, indeed the world, is facing having to do with climate change, flooding, storms and whatever.

Business risk management programs like production insurance help producers deal with situations that are outside of their control—as I've said, typically, climate change, storms, flooding, those sorts of things. Production insurance makes timely payments to producers and eliminates the need for costly ad hoc responses to these adverse conditions that pop up, as I say, without notice.

The idea here is to give more producers in agribusiness in Ontario access to production insurance. That will help them to better manage risk and encourage greater innovation, job creation and growth in the agri-food sector.

Looking outside of Ontario, in Canada we have a national suite of integrated and complementary business risk management programs in place to help farmers manage risks that are beyond their control. One of the elements is, as I mentioned, the production insurance program, but thus far, Ontario's inability to offer production insurance plans—and this is key—for those commodities beyond crops and perennial plants represents a real gap in the suite of business risk management programs that Ontario is in a position to offer. This puts pressure on the province to respond with ad hoc programming when producers experience significant production shortfalls and those shortfalls are beyond their control. So we do have, if you will, a partial risk management program in place, and what this act is designed to do is to expand that and make the risks that are covered by the Risk Management Program more uniformly available and more widely available to manage these agri-risks.

When the producers suffer losses and don't have production insurance, they often come to us for direct ad hoc assistance. We've seen ad hoc programs cost the province of Ontario millions of dollars in a single year.

I want to highlight now, just very briefly, some of the other points of the program. The expanded production insurance program would, if passed, provide similar financial assistance but divide the cost between the federal government, the provincial government and producers in a predictable and incremental way over a much longer period of time.

Ontario made a commitment to expand production insurance beyond crops and perennial plants when the ministry signed the federal-provincial-territorial Growing Forward 2 amendments in 2013. Over the long term, this will allow the province of Ontario to consider strategies that include moving away from provincial-only support towards tools that will attract federal funding.

I can say this: The proposed amendments will have no immediate financial impact. Approval of this request for the enabling legislation, if passed, will align the province of Ontario with the rest of Canada and enable Ontario to participate in the various innovative production insurance programs that are currently used in other parts of the country.

I will now be sharing my time with the member from Sudbury and the member from York South–Weston.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise today and to be able to speak to this act to amend the Crop Insurance Act, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

Many people know that Sudbury is a mining community. We always talk a lot about mining and the benefits of mining in Sudbury, but we do have a lot of agriculture in Sudbury and area. For me, it's very important to be able to rise today and speak to this because it's great to know that our government is committed to helping its agri-food partners manage risk. For many of those businesses and many of those farms and farmers in northern Ontario—and specifically what I'm talking about is in greater Sudbury and area—we have a great agriculture business at our farmers' market on a weekly basis, especially in the spring, summer and fall. They're producing many new crops and organic crops. They're bringing this to our community, and our community is purchasing this. It would be very worrisome if something was to happen to these crops and to these farmers and to how they make a living, so it's great to see that we're actually coming forward with some amendments here to this Agriculture Insurance Act.

I think it's important to recognize that business risk management programs like production insurance help producers deal with the situations that are outside of their control, such as weather, disease and extreme market fluctuation. Northern Ontario can also have some very fluctuating weather on a regular basis. Sometimes even in June we'll see some snow, every once in a while—not that we see it often, but it does happen. I think, if you're looking at a national component here, we have a suite of integrated and complementary business risk management programs in place to help farmers manage those risks that are beyond their control.

Of course, one of the important aspects to mention in this—and it's written right here on the second page—is that Ontario, this government, also made a commitment to expand production insurance beyond crops and perennial plants when the ministry signed the federal-provincial-territorial Growing Forward 2 agreement in 2013. Over the long term, this will allow the province the opportunity to consider strategies that include moving away from provincial-only support towards tools that attract federal funding as well. I think that is an important aspect to consider when looking at farmers, especially when you're looking at organic farming, which is happening quite a bit in Sudbury.

I can think of many businesses in my community—one of them is called Eat Local. Many of these farmers provide their products to Eat Local. They send this product out throughout northern Ontario. So I think it's a very important piece for us to get involved with, and I'm very happy to speak to this today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York South–Weston.

0910

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to participate in this debate. I want to start by making reference to what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs was making reference

to. He mentioned that by giving more producers the opportunity to access production insurance we would help them manage risk better and encourage greater innovation, profitability and job creation in the agri-food sector.

The riding that I represent, York South–Weston, is certainly an urban riding, not an agricultural riding; however, we need farmers and we need consumers. Speaking about job creation and greater innovation in this sector, I have had the opportunity, even recently, to visit some new businesses that are opening in our riding and that are tied to the Ontario agricultural sector.

I want to mention Fresh City Farms. They offer local and organic grocery delivery. People in the cities are interested in quality food. Where do we get that quality food if not from our farmers? We have the Weston Village Farmers' Market, which is open every spring, summer and fall in York South–Weston, and we have farmers who come from different parts of Ontario to offer their produce to the many local residents who are thrilled to be able to shop and to access local quality food.

I also recently visited the Toronto Distillery Co. This is the first distillery that has opened in the city of Toronto in the last 80 years. What makes them different—what is making their business thrive—is the fact that they offer whisky made from local organic grains. That is drawing consumers, and it's making this company thrive.

There are parts of my riding that are experiencing, really, a cultural renaissance, all because of this. So, it's important to give our farmers more access to production insurance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to respond to the government's talk about Bill 40. I recall that a year ago last summer, our member from Oxford, who at the time was our critic for agriculture, actually came to the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex and viewed a number of fields that had, in fact, incurred substantial crop losses at that particular point in time, due to extensive rain and flooding. Of course, this particular bill is going to be increasing the number of crops that will be insured.

Although we are supporting it—I'll make that point very clear right now—I do have a concern about it: What's the actual cost going to be to the farmer as well? Of course, if you take a look at the cost of insurance versus the cost of losses, it makes sense to me as well.

Yesterday in the House, our member from Simcoe North talked about coyotes and the damage that coyotes do to farm animals—how it's vicious attacks.

One of the things that I'd like to just briefly mention is that we have a problem in this province with regard to stray current. Of course, stray current is current that runs along the ground. We may not feel it as humans; however, livestock, especially dairy cattle, do, in fact, feel it. When you talk to dairy farmers, what they are experiencing is a tremendous loss in milk production, because what happens is that current goes to the water and when the dairy cattle's tongues touch the water, they get a tingling. Then they don't drink, and that affects milk produc-

tion. I think we need to take a look at that. There are, in fact, two losses here: Loss of milk production, and this stray current is, of course, very brutal on the cattle themselves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to speak about agriculture in this House, and to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his comments on Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

I'd like to make a couple of comments. Basically, the other provinces signed on to this in 2003, so we're 10 years behind in looking at what crops we can insure. In his comments, he said there would no immediate financial impact to the province. That is true, because this bill alone, although it changes the wording, doesn't actually increase the coverage for any farmer in the province—not one iota; nothing. It allows us to go further and talk about increasing coverage, but it, in itself, doesn't.

Under the old Crop Insurance Act, the province kicked in 24% of the cost of the program on those crops. So if we're going to insure more agricultural products—which we fully support—and we're going to use the same framework, then the province has to kick in 24%. The kicker is going to be, where is that 24%, so many millions of dollars, going to come from? If they are just planning on taking these so many millions of dollars from another agricultural program, farmers and the agricultural community could actually be suffering a net loss of coverage instead of a net gain.

So while we fully support the changes in the wording, the devil is in the details of how these programs are going to be funded. When the minister said there's no financial impact, that means there is no benefit to farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: It's a pleasure for me to speak on this matter this morning. As you know, my riding of Durham is strictly rural farmland. Two weeks ago, I met with farmers during a round table, and they were very supportive of this government's effort on our Risk Management Program. As a matter of fact, the program was cut back to \$100 million, and farmers are very upset in my riding. They want it to go back to its regular amount of \$150 million. The problem is that the federal government is not kicking in to support this very, very vital endeavour for our farmers in the rural communities.

With the help of the federal government, we'll be able to enhance farmers and expand the program, so that farmers are able to recoup losses for crops that they suffered during downtime or during any economic downturn. Again, Mr. Speaker, the federal government will have to kick in their fair share so that the farmers can maximize their profits and increase production in all areas.

Mr. Speaker, the Risk Management Program, as you know, is designed to help farmers and is premium-based, the costs of which are shared by farmers and by governments, and both levels of government have to put in their fair share, in order to enhance this program.

An expanded production insurance program could, if passed, provide similar financial assistance but divide the cost between the federal government, the provincial government and producers in a predictable and incremental way over a much longer period of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few moments of questions and comments on Bill 40 and the number of speakers from the government side.

I just want to again put on the record that this is a very important bill for the PC caucus. I know we have a number of members here today who haven't had the opportunity to speak. Probably the majority of our caucus has not had the chance to put some comments on the record. The one thing that I have noticed about our members—and I'll compare my speech on this bill on Monday to the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition's speech yesterday, as there are some really significantly different points that we're bringing up.

Agriculture touches many ridings in this province, and not one of them is the same. I know that in my riding, when this bill has passed second reading and goes to committee, there's a very strong feeling, because of what has happened in my riding in the last year with the closure of Kemptville College by the University of Guelph, enabled by this government, that they should come to a community like Kemptville, which has had a rich, 97-year tradition of agricultural education. I know I have said this and, granted, I'll give you the fact that this one point I am going to say is repeating what I said in my speech Monday, but the government itself has a report that says there is a severe shortage of students graduating in agricultural education at the diploma and degree levels.

0920

If we are ever going to meet the needs that this government has set for 120,000 new jobs in the agriculture sector, we've got to make a commitment to agricultural education; we've got to make a commitment to those young men and women who want to work on farms and go to school. This government has to wake up to that fact. They have to include some funding for communities like Kemptville, and Kemptville College. The government needs to listen to the opposition when they make these points.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has two minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to point out that in our Liberal caucus, 12 of our 58 members are from rural ridings, or parts of their ridings cover rural areas. They understand the agricultural issues in their ridings. But even more important, let me say that it's not just a matter of those members from rural ridings understanding this piece of legislation. I would say that we in this House—all of us, whether we are from urban ridings or rural ridings, small-town Ontario, downtown Toronto—are all agricultural people, in a sense, because we depend on the farming community to supply the crops and foods that we

eat, whether we're in downtown Toronto, whether we're living in a rural riding, whether we're living in small-town Ontario or the far north. In that sense, we all have a very deep and vested interest in rural affairs, because what is good for the agricultural community in Ontario is good for everyone in Ontario.

What this act does is enable agribusinesses to expand their coverage under their production insurance risks. To the extent that agribusiness can manage risks, in the sense of damage to crops or production shortfalls and the like, because of situations out of their control—storms, climatic conditions and so on—that's good for all of us. It gives agribusiness stability, and it gives pricing stability, which ultimately helps us all when we're in stores buying our produce, groceries and so on. In that sense, all of us, whatever riding we are from, are agri-people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill. Technically, the bill amends the Crop Insurance Act (Ontario), 1996, to expand the scope of the act. Currently, the act applies to agricultural crops and perennial plants. This bill would expand the act so that it would apply to all agricultural products that are designated by the minister by regulation. The title of the act is also amended to reflect the expanded scope of the legislation. That's the technical aspect of it.

Let's talk about what that really means. My wife, Patty, and I had the occasion this past weekend to spend time with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in Powassan. It was a very informative session. I got to speak a little bit about the Premier's Award—to ask for applications. But what we really talked about was agriculture in the north. When you think of North Bay or Powassan or Mattawa, you don't necessarily think about agriculture, right off the bat. But as you go even further north than North Bay, and get to New Liskeard, you have to realize that in the north about 50% of our canola in Ontario was grown in the north—I say “was,” and I'll get to why I mean that in a moment.

About 40% of the oats in all of Ontario is grown in northern Ontario. It's just not something that people would quickly acknowledge or think about. They think about climate and the cold, and they think, “How could you do that?” But there's a tremendous amount of agriculture and activity in the north.

When I say there was 50% of the canola, there's a terrible blight that is going through—a bug, if you will—and has devastated that crop. So farmers must be assured of stability, predictability and bankability in their industry. We need to make sure that any new measures don't impact the existing or current programs that help the farmers.

As we were at this farm symposium on Saturday—and let me tell you, Speaker, Patty and I have been to the farm symposiums year after year. In my many years as mayor of the city of North Bay, understanding how important agriculture is, we would continue to go.

We were treated this weekend to a delicious dinner—a luncheon, I should say. When we go to the Beef Farmers

it's always a fabulous side of beef that they cook, and Patty's favourite apple pie. But I have to tell you that we had cipaille this weekend. For those who aren't familiar with traditional cipaille, it was an odd time of year to make it, but as opposed to the normal beef luncheon it was a cipaille lunch that the farmers put on. That is a combination of chicken and pork and beef that's put in a crockpot and cooked in a traditional brick oven.

Mr. Michael Mantha: And moose and partridge.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, moose and partridge in your neck of the woods. In Astorville, they make it—I have to say, it was a surprise because normally we're treated to quite a luncheon there.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Great Canadian chef or something.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, it's important. This is all about our food and where it comes from. The interesting thing is, a lot of it comes from the north.

The Amish community has settled in Chisholm, Ontario, and Powassan as well, and have taken these farms that have been shut down and abandoned, in some cases for over 50 years. As we've driven on the back roads through Powassan and Chisholm, you now see a lot of activity. The Amish—what I understand is that they heard there was good agricultural land, especially north of North Bay in the Timiskaming-Cochrane area, but as they were driving up from the south they saw this rich land that was underutilized and they began to buy up the land. They now have a fabulously huge Amish community in Chisholm, Ontario, that is raising crops and farming and practising their way of life. It's absolutely spectacular to see.

Patty and I enjoy going there every July. They're raising money for a school in their own community, and we go there for this fabulous pancake breakfast. Yes, Speaker, it's all about the food.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I noticed that you've been to quite a few of those.

Interjection: You're getting us hungry back here.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, we are here talking about agriculture and food. I talked to one of the directors of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture over our cipaille lunch, and this is where he was telling me about this blight, this bug that has infested the north. It has knocked our crop from—because I said to him, “Look, I'm going to be speaking in the Legislature next week on agriculture. Is it still 50% canola, 40% oats?”

He said, “Well, Vic, with this blight, it may be down to as little as providing 8% of the canola.” That's how devastating this bug has been.

Farmers have long requested that production insurance plans move beyond just crops to include insurance for additional agricultural products. Currently, Ontario has available production insurance for almost 90 commercially grown crops, including grains and oilseeds—corn, soy, wheat and that type of thing—tree fruits, grapes, vegetables, specialty crops and forage.

Production insurance is an important aspect of the life of any farm and anybody involved in agriculture. It lends

a hand to farmers to deal with the losses from natural events like weather, pests and disease. Again, when you see something so devastating as this bug that has gone through the north and taken a crop that has provided 50% of a product to Ontario and reduced it to 8%—this is something that we need to sit up and take note of and take seriously.

0930

On that note, again, I want to speak in this Legislature, as I have many, many times—joining my friend from Timiskaming—Cochrane, who has also been fighting hard for this—on the New Liskeard research centre. It's under threat of closure.

Speaker, they are the institution where your seed potatoes are grown. All seed potatoes in Ontario start in a test tube in New Liskeard, Ontario. Our strawberries: All the strawberries, the disease-free strawberries that are grown in Ontario, all start in a test tube in New Liskeard, Ontario. This is an institution that is so vitally important to agriculture, and it is under threat of closure.

They also have 455 head of cattle, and they are studying cattle through the lens of our northern climate. They also are writing reports on agriculture in the north as well as agriculture throughout Ontario.

This is an incredibly important sector for northern Ontario and for all of Ontario. I would hope that we will see all parties continue, as the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and I have, fighting—almost desperately fighting—to maintain the survivability of this very important agricultural research centre.

Again, as I have done many, many times, when I speak of agriculture in this Legislature, I invite members who may not be from rural Ontario to come to the north and see first-hand. Both the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane—I'm sure I can speak for the member—and I would invite you. Come on up. We'll take you on a tour. We'll take you to farms. We'll show you the Amish community, the new growth and development there. We'll take you to the New Liskeard research centre so that you can appreciate exactly how vitally important that small and sparsely-staffed facility is to all agriculture throughout all of Ontario.

Speaker, Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act, is an important bill, again, for all the farming community and all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to speak on agriculture and to follow the member from Nipissing. In his remarks, he did a very accurate portrayal of agriculture in northern Ontario, specifically the New Liskeard research station. What happened at the New Liskeard research station a few years ago—it was under threat of closure, and a group of farmers from across the north came together, made a board, and are working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food to try and keep that as a viable operation, because the conditions in the north are much different than in other parts of the province. That's one of the reasons why our area is such a good

area for growing canola: Our conditions are different than the rest of the province. That's why we are looking for ways to combat pests like the swede midge.

Something we haven't talked about enough in this Legislature—but that's why we need to have the discussion—is neonicotinoid insecticides, because canola is one of the crops that depend on neonicotinoid insecticides. So it's a viable, important discussion. There will be two sides to this discussion, as there always are, but it's important that we come to the middle.

I'd also like to commend the member for bringing up the Amish contribution to northern Ontario. In my riding as well, they are coming and they are using land that had been dormant for many years. Because their farming practices are much different, they have the capability of using land that sometimes is overlooked by modern commercial agriculture simply because of the size of the field.

One thing I would like to remark on in this Legislature is that while we're talking about production insurance, something that a lot of people don't know is that the Amish population does not participate in any Ontario production insurance program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the members who have already spoken on this very important bill, the Agriculture Insurance Act, 2014. It gives me great pleasure to speak on this very important issue.

You may wonder: What does a member from a very urban riding such as Davenport know about farms, or why is this so important to the people of Davenport? Well, I'm no stranger to farms; I'm no stranger to the rural areas. My in-laws, actually, live in Chatham, so I'm very familiar with southwestern Ontario and how important the farming industry is in that area. It is, after all, those farms that put the food on the tables of my constituents in Davenport.

I'm very proud that every summer at Dufferin Grove, one of the main parks that we have in the riding, we have a farmers' market which is very, very well attended and provides products from all across southwestern Ontario and our great province.

The Ontario agriculture sector is a vibrant and strong sector. In 2013, we have here that Ontario generated \$12.1 billion in farm cash receipts, or about 22% of Canada's farm cash receipts. This is an increase of over \$2 billion compared to 2008 farm cash receipts. However, agriculture markets are volatile, and these fluctuations are why it is so important to have effective business risk management programs in place. Expanding the ability to offer production insurance to more agriculture commodities is important in helping producers manage the multitude of risks they face every day.

I have one particular restaurant in my riding, Hogtown Cure, which actually brings in a pig every week from southwestern Ontario. What would his restaurant be if he could not depend on getting that pig from the farm in southwestern Ontario on a weekly basis?

Mr. Speaker, it was a great pleasure to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a pleasure to respond to my colleague Mr. Fedeli from North Bay on his comments this morning.

Interruption.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll put my phone away.

Clearly, although he lives in an urban setting, he's a member who takes the agricultural sector very seriously. You only have to hear his professionalism on attending the farmers' markets, going out to meet the Amish community, knowing the percentage of canola versus other crops etc.

We had the International Plowing Match, I think it's four or five years ago now, in the Kirkland Lake area. I thought they did a very professional job. It was a really good opportunity to showcase agriculture in the north, because I know at the time that many, many people from southern Ontario didn't have the awareness of the kind of agriculture that does take place in the north, to the tune of thousands of acres in that region.

So I'm glad he had an opportunity to speak this morning on that, and I'm glad that he had the opportunity to give us a little bit of background on how he likes cooking and fine foods. He clearly knows all the details of all the ingredients that are in each recipe that he seems to take advantage of at noon hours at these farmers' markets and agricultural events.

There's one thing for sure: If you're at an agricultural event in the farming community, you will be very, very well fed. All you have to remember are the stories about the old thrashing days when there was a huge lunch every day for people as they thrashed in community groups.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll just follow up on the comments that came out in regard to the delicatessens that come out of the farming families across Algoma-Manitoulin. I observe them every opportunity that I get. Those cipailles are something else; you just can't say no. Cipailles, regardless of how you make them, are fantastic traditional foods. When you are provided with that dish, it's basically like getting a hug from the farming community, because they're giving you a part of their history.

0940

I wanted to follow up on some of the comments by the member from—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Nipissing.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —Nipissing, particularly as it pertains to the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance. Yes, if we're going to go forward with this bill—and I wholeheartedly believe that we should—we will need to keep them in sight. We need to make sure of that innovation and that we have the funding, in order to keep places like the Northern Ontario Farm Innovation Alliance.

But we also have RAIN across Algoma-Manitoulin. RAIN is an organization; it's the Rural Agri-Innovation Network. A lot of what they are looking at, up in the New Liskeard area, is in regard to how agriculture can be developed and also encouraged across the Algoma region, and also Manitoulin Island. That is some of the funding that we're going to also want to see that will complement the Crop Insurance Act.

Algoma-Manitoulin is an area that is now being seriously considered as a farming area. The farming time of year is now expanded, and we have some good, pristine lands that are going to be there. In order to attract those young families, yes, we need to make sure that the schools are there in order to attract young people in order to go into the farming communities, but we need to make sure that the investment is here so that the decisions can be made that are good for those farmers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing has two minutes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming-Cochrane, Davenport, Simcoe North and Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments and contributions to this as well.

Again, I want to remind the Legislature of the significance of agriculture in northern Ontario. Specifically referring to this bill—again, at one point, up to and including last year, not only 40% of the oats in Ontario were grown in northern Ontario, but 50% of the canola was. It's the swede midge pest that has infiltrated northern Ontario and has caused our crop to go from 50% of production down to about 8%, which the Ontario Federation of Agriculture told me on Saturday. That's very concerning, and that's why this bill, in my opinion, is so important. It does acknowledge; it does offer farmers stability, predictability and what we like to call bankability.

On that, I would again reach out to the members, all 107 members, and invite them to Nipissing, invite them to come up any time of year, especially in the summer when we can tour some of the farms, particularly the Amish farms, who have taken this once fallow land and turned it into viable farms.

My wife, Patty, likes to say, when we drive down the Alsace Road in Chisholm, "It seems they can throw bird seed and up pop canaries." That's how fertile the land seems to be throughout northern Ontario.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak to Bill 40, the Agriculture Insurance Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure and an honour to stand in this House and express the views of my constituents in Windsor-Tecumseh.

Before I begin this morning, let me say hello to Marty Gillis in the members' gallery here. He's with the WFCU board, in town for the lobby day at Queen's Park. Welcome, Marty. Glad you're here.

Speaker, my voice is failing me this morning, but let me tell you that while much of my riding of Windsor—

Tecumseh is an urban setting, a good chunk of it, especially in the Tecumseh area, is rural agricultural.

Just recently, I received a letter from the owner and operator of an abattoir in my riding. As you may know, Speaker, there are 132 provincially licensed slaughter plants that rely on provincial meat inspectors. The abattoir in question has been in the owner's family for more than 100 years—105, to be exact. They currently employ more than 20 people; I'm told that most of them are young people with growing families. The plant offers steady, reliable work.

This is far from being the largest slaughterhouse in the province, but they process about 800 market-size hogs a week, and that's nothing to sneeze at. They have contracts with seven hog producers in Essex county and Chatham-Kent. The animals are raised to the specifications that best fit the company's customer base. When slaughtered, processed and packaged, the meat is shipped as far away as Vaughan Mills, north of Toronto here. They service 40 direct customers. The fixed cost to the owners of this one small plant, just to keep the doors open, with no expenses at all related to production, is \$8,100 a week. That's a heck of a lot of money. If this plant was shut down for any reason for a week, the income that would be lost is \$205,900. That's really a lot of money, no matter who you are.

The owners say they're trying to make progress and grow the agri-food sector, just as they've been challenged by the Premier to do. You'll recall that the Premier, who was a former Minister of Agriculture, challenged the agricultural sector to create 120,000 new jobs and double the sector's growth rate within five years by 2020.

I know that we're speaking to Bill 40, An Act to amend the Crop Insurance Act, 1996, which was limited and only provided some protection to farmers growing crops and perennial plants. Now we're expanding the insurance plan to cover all agricultural products. Speaker, that's a good thing; don't get me wrong. But the reason for the letter is that the owner of the slaughterhouse is not convinced that the minister has taken the necessary steps to provide a backup plan should the hard-working members of OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, be unsuccessful in their collective bargaining efforts with the government. Let us all hope that the government and OPSEU can bargain a contract that is mutually acceptable.

The livelihood of thousands of people beyond those at the bargaining table are at stake, and I've given you just one example. If there was a strike that lasted two weeks without qualified meat inspectors, the animals would grow to a size that they couldn't be processed at this one plant in my riding because they'd be too large for their equipment as well as for the specifications of the plant's customers.

We, as a group, I believe, don't think enough about the trials and tribulations of our farmers and food processors. Too many of us have taken them for granted for far too long. Farmers feed cities. That's a fact; it's not a political slogan. I'm reminded of it every day. I have that

sign in my office here at Queen's Park and in my constituency office at Tecumseh and Rivard back in the city of Windsor. I proudly display those signs: "Farmers feed cities." That's why this act, government Bill 40, is so important to us all.

I know that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is aware of this situation at the abattoir in my riding because he was copied on that letter that I referenced this morning. We, the minister and I, have been asked to convey the owner's concerns to the Premier and to the president of the Treasury Board as well, and I hope that I have done that this morning.

Getting back to Bill 40, agricultural insurance is one of the fundamental tools we have to ensure our food security and to protect the men and women who grow our food. Currently, I believe, the old act covered about 14,000 farmers, and the annual payouts have ranged from \$26 million to as high as \$113 million. I say to the minister's parliamentary assistant that in 2013—what was it; about \$84 million, I think? The member from Beaches—East York is nodding yes in agreement. Farmers pay 40% of the cost of the insurance plan. The feds kick in 36% and Ontario pays the remaining 24%.

0950

I guess what troubles me at this point is that there are no dollars attached to this enabling legislation. There's nothing in here that says we're going to put in \$25 million, \$50 million or whatever it is to support what we're talking about. That's scary to some of us because, as we know, according to the 2014 budget, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is among a group of ministries facing annual cuts of 6% a year, every year for three years.

I know that my cautious critic for the ministry, Mr. Vanthof, the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, has expressed cautious optimism about Bill 40, stating, and I quote, "If we just take a couple of recent examples, like PED in pork, BSE in beef and colony collapse in bees, those are examples of farms and farmers that could have and should have been insured." The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane went on to say that the amendment to the language in the legislation, and I'll finish the quote, "will make the difference between paying the bills and losing your livelihood. When people pay their bills, they create jobs here.

"We are looking forward to working with the minister and the ministry to make sure that this is done correctly and that it's done right the first time."

This change doesn't come about overnight. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been fighting for this for years. With that in mind: a shout-out this morning to the new OFA president, Don McCabe from Lambton county, and former president Mark Wales from Elgin. Congratulations to you both for your hard work on twisting the arms of the Liberals that needed to be twisted and changing the mind of the government that needed to be changed.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the fantastic food processing plant in my riding, the Bonduelle plant in Tecum-

sch, the one that was hit by that terrible fire last July. The plant employs 200 people full-time and another 450 on a seasonal basis. Bonduelle took over the former Family Tradition plant six years ago. My buddy Johnnie O., John Omstead, used to run that plant, and sold it to Bonduelle. They also have plants in Ingersoll and Strathroy, as well as four facilities in Quebec. They are Canada's leading processor of canned and frozen vegetables. They also process frozen fruit, canned soups, sauces, baked beans, as well as dry beans.

Farmers feed cities. Speaker, I'll say it again: Farmers feed cities. And I'll say it again: There are no regulatory changes or funding attached to this bill. We all know that new regulations will be needed before livestock farmers and other producers are protected under the proposed expanded insurance program.

I'm not trying to look a gift horse in the mouth, Speaker. I hope I'm not seen as doing that, but let's get it done. Let's get it done right. As the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane has said, "Let's get it done right the first time." I remember my friend Mark Wales, the former president, saying they've been after it for 10 years. It's about time. We'll be supporting it.

Thank you for your time this morning, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to be here this morning to respond to the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I certainly appreciate his comments and the supportive comments by members on all sides of the House.

I think we're all aptly aware of the contribution farmers make in the province of Ontario, the tremendous work that they do and the tremendous importance they play in our economic well-being in the province of Ontario. In 2013 alone—we've heard the number—over \$12 billion in farm receipts contributed to the economy. It is very significant.

I know that with respect to a number of programs in northern Ontario—and I heard the member from Nipissing speak a bit about northern Ontario and the farming communities in northern Ontario. I know the member from Algoma-Manitoulin is well aware of the huge potential of farming in the area around Sault Ste. Marie and in his area of Algoma-Manitoulin.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund program, or corporation, through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, in fact has a tile drainage program to support entrepreneurs and the farming community in northern Ontario. It has significantly helped to raise the productivity of farming in the area, in our region.

As well, we've put supports into a program at our university to work with local communities in our region. The acronym is RAIN; it stands for the Rural Agri-Innovation Network. It has been a tremendous benefit to our particular region of the province.

I know, with respect to the tremendous changes that we are seeing with respect to our climate, that this type of production insurance and crop insurance is key to helping

farmers sustain their livelihoods in the long term. We've talked about this for quite some time. I would encourage the members to allow the debate to collapse and allow this to get to committee. Let's get this done. We can all talk about the benefits of farming, and farming in Ontario, but let's get this to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 40 and to the comments of the member from Windsor-Tecumseh and also, before him, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who lives as a farmer and knows it first-hand.

It's a pleasure to hear so many members who are not rural, not farmers, speak with understanding that this is an important issue, an issue that our community, the people of Ontario as a whole—and indeed across Canada it's being done.

I am a farmer myself, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say I have experienced the benefit of crop insurance, unfortunately, because I experienced crop failures due to weather. I will tell you first-hand that it was a very beneficial program that took an awful lot of pressure off my business and that of a lot of my neighbours, who all suffered greatly from bad weather.

The program works well for crop farmers, which it is in place for at the moment. It is good to see that it would be expanded to other things, which are undefined at this point in time. I would hope the minister would expand them to things like livestock farming, because cropping is pretty much covered at the moment—beef farming, sheep farming and other types of animal agriculture.

For instance, in 2003, when mad cow disease happened and the American border was closed overnight to Canadian beef exports to the United States, that was devastation for the beef farmers of Ontario. This was done in the public interest, to protect consumers from so-called risk of food contamination from mad cow disease. Thousands of farmers were put out of business by that action, because 50% of the beef we produce in Canada was going across the American border. Protection for those people, I would say, was in the public interest, and it should be the public that shares the responsibility for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to commend the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on a very good debate and contribution to the bill that we're discussing today. Obviously, there is consensus in the House that we all believe that farming is an extremely important industry to our livelihood and to Ontario and especially to Canada.

You don't have to go very far, even in Toronto, to get experience or some education or understanding of farming, and I'll speak from my own dealings. I went with the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane to Dairy Farmers of Ontario. They had their AGM; I spoke to them about some of their issues. Then I went to the Beef Farmers of Ontario, and spoke to them as well. The member from Prince Edward—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Leeds–Grenville.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —Leeds–Grenville was also there.

Mr. Steve Clark: I saw you there.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, he was also there.

Yesterday I went to an event for a mutual insurance company, just here in the Legislature, and I was speaking to someone who was a grape farmer in Niagara-on-the-Lake. They were talking about insurance, because that's what they were here for. But he also expressed concern—because I asked the question: In the insurance industry, the claims that property insurance companies experience, has there been an escalation with regard to climate change, or is it because people are not taking the preventive measures on their property insurance? This is what perhaps is driving the claims loss ratio to higher levels. They expressed that it's mostly climate change.

1000

The farmer whom I was talking to, who was also on the board of a mutual insurance company, said that at one point in Niagara he got eight inches of water in a span of three hours. It destroyed his grape crop for that year. So climate change is extremely important to farmers, and it affects their crops as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. It's interesting that this bill is of widespread interest to all of us. I think that we've have had nine hours to debate on it. We've had over half the members. What's good about it is the fact that—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: With all due respect to the dean of the Legislature, there are members who are here in their seats ready to debate this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a minute. First of all, for the member from Leeds–Grenville, he'll retract the "dean of the Legislature" comment. Stand up and retract it.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Secondly, that's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The point I was making, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with—come on. I'm pointing out how important it is that you had members from rural Ontario and urban Ontario—and the widespread interest and ability that you would think would be primarily of interest to people in the agricultural community. I was commending members on that, but we get this smart-aleck remark from the member for Brockville on this particular issue.

I want to say this: What is interesting is that we would not have had this a number of years ago because, you'll remember, in the late 1990s the House was reduced from

130 members to 103 members. You know who lost on that? Rural Ontario lost on that. That's who lost on that.

The last thing I want to say on how important it is: I'm a person who came into this Legislature to help ensure that agricultural land was protected. We don't have a lot of arable land in this country or this province. We must protect it. But it's very important, through crop insurance and other measures, that those who are not farmers make sure that it is viable to be a farmer in this province. If we want to save the land, we have to save the farmer. This helps us to do so. I commend the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Windsor–Tecumseh has two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to thank the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the members for Carleton–Mississippi Mills and London–Fanshawe, and, of course, the minister without portfolio for their comments, especially the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who has direct experience with insurance as it relates to farmers. He knows perfectly well the need for this bill and for expanding it.

I also heard, throughout the debate on this topic, about the need for money. There has got to be money behind the bill, and, unfortunately, not a lot of us are convinced that there will be enough money put into it because of the cuts that have been announced in previous budgets. I hope it's not lip service. I hope there will be real teeth in this bill and that all the farmers in Ontario will be able to take advantage of what is on the table.

When it comes to insurance, I mentioned earlier today that a friend of mine, Marty Gillis from the Windsor Family Credit Union, is in the gallery. We've talked many times in this Legislature and a lot of petitions have been presented asking that credit unions have a level playing field. One would be that in order to compete they would be able to sell insurance, as they do in Quebec—Desjardins. Desjardins sells its insurance in Ontario.

I think that when we talk about crop insurance and we talk about insurance for farmers, it would be good to tie in other things that we talk about in the House, including making a level playing field for credit unions. I hope that many of us will be meeting with representatives from credit unions across Ontario today, and that we keep an open mind when we do that, as we have kept an open mind when we talk about exploring Bill 40.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to stand up today and add my two cents on the Agriculture Insurance Act. I find it quite interesting that I'm actually getting the opportunity to speak. I tried to speak to the two previous bills that were on this floor. However, the Liberal government here decides to speak three, four people over a 10-minute period and now say to the Speaker in the chair at the time that so many MPs have spoken, when in fact they've declined any of the opposition of actually speaking to the bill, and unfortunately, those bills have gone forward.

The fear was that the government would stand up today and refuse further debate for the opposition. So I'm

kind of glad that they haven't gone back to their games and tactics that they've been promoting since they became the majority government in Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start out first of all by giving some praise to a couple of local farmers in my riding who today are being honoured and entered into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame. I have Tom Bradish from Glanworth. Tom is a long-time farmer in the area. He grew up on a dairy farm and does cash crops right now. In fact, he started a processing facility with a couple of other farmers in Strathroy and sold that off recently. Tom is a great asset to the community. He has been part of the International Plowing Match and the Canadian plowing association. He'll be inducted today into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.

Roy Jewell, from the Dutton and Dunwich area, will also be inducted today. Roy started out with a CFPL radio program, one of the first farmer radio shows, years back, long ago, which in fact transitioned to become the first televised farm program on CFPL, called the Roy Jewell Farm Show. That lasted quite a long time.

I'm quite proud that two of my constituents from the Middlesex part—actually, Roy is kind of in the Elgin part of my riding—are joining the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame, and we're quite proud to have them in my riding. Congratulations to them and their families for their accomplishments with regard to agriculture in our communities.

It's also just to note that traditionally, growing up—I didn't grow up on a farm; I grew up with farms around my area. I grew up in the beautiful city of St. Thomas. But every day at noon, CFPL London, which is now CTV News in London, would have the farmers' market report. Ross Daily would be on there for a minute or two, and he would go through all the markets and what the prices were for beans and sows and what have you. I always thought that was a normal part of life. I didn't realize that's really central to being part of an agricultural community in rural Ontario, that they would actually take the time out of the news cycle to talk about the markets and how they were affecting the farmers in our area. I'm sure many of my friends whose parents were farmers—their parents would be in at the noontime to have their lunch, in order to watch what the farm markets were doing, because the Internet wasn't around at that time. It wasn't in their pocket, to be able to check the farm markets; obviously, they had to call someone. But they were able to get access on the news. That's something I'm quite proud of that I just wanted to make mention of, as I got the opportunity to speak today.

Really, what this bill comes forward for is basically expanding the Risk Management Program for farmers throughout our province, and I think that's a great idea. My concern—and hopefully, it will be addressed somewhere down the line—is that the money that's collected yearly for the Risk Management Program from the farmers isn't touched by this government, or any future government, for any purposes other than what it is to serve, which is to have an insurance program for the farmers.

I'm hoping that the money is collected and put in a separate fund, much like the special-purpose account is for hunting and fishing licences, that's supposed to be put into a separate fund and only used for resource management.

However, I do have to say that this government has not tabled a single report detailing the special-purpose account, as they're legislatively forced to, for the last three years. They've broken the law by not tabling these reports, and they're refusing to do so. So even though they have that special fund that's supposed to be used, they are not reporting on how they're spending it. Who knows where they've wasted that money?

However, back to this agricultural bill: I'm hoping that if this passes and goes forward, a separate fund can be created that keeps the government's hands out of this pool of money. Because we know, with a \$12-billion deficit, a \$325-billion debt, and \$11 billion a year in interest payments, that they're looking for money. The last thing I'd hate to see is for this government to collect fees from our farmers in our communities, who are banking on that money to be there when catastrophe hits—that this government will take that money and spend it elsewhere, that it won't be there for them when the time comes, that they'll create this imaginary cap: "Oh, we didn't have the money to help you out during this catastrophe." The fear is that that's what they're going to do.

1010

We can even draw that parallel to their impending Ontario pension plan they're coming forward with. We all know they're going to collect that money and they're going put it aside, but the temptation for them to use that money to fund their infrastructure projects over the next 10 years is going to be great. I would imagine that this government will pilfer the money and not spend it where it should be.

I know I was deviating a bit, and I thank you for the little bit of leeway there, but I'll get back to the agriculture bill. Expanding the ability of the bill is a great idea, but where that money goes, how it's collected and how it's spent is a grave concern on the opposition side here, because we don't trust the government and many people in Ontario don't trust this government. I know, coming from rural Ontario, the people who are going to be paying into this fund don't trust that that money will be there when they need it, because this government has a history of spending more than it takes in.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Say it ain't so.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, you know.

Hopefully, they get on the ball and that fund is untouchable—and at the same time, they'll table those documents on the special-purpose account so those who are hunting and fishing can know where their money is being spent. The government is saying that that account has no money in it, so they have to create new fees, hence the \$2 service fee. On every transaction with hunting and angling in this province—if you buy an Outdoors Card, if you buy a licence, if you buy a tag—

it's \$2. And that money doesn't go to the special-purpose account; that goes to wherever they want to spend it. They're deviating around it to create more money.

They're also talking about starting a seniors' fishing licence because they don't have the money. I say: Prove it. Prove where the money has gone so that we can have a good, open discussion of what's going on with the special-purpose account.

If I could take it back to the agricultural risk management program, I can see them down the road coming forward and saying, "We don't have enough money. We need to increase the terms and conditions for farmers to pay into this program," but they will not table the document, most likely, saying where they've spent the money or how they spent that money. So it's a grave, grave concern to me.

The other thing I wanted to touch on with regard to agriculture, which I've had local corn, soybean and other farmers come talk to me about, is with regard to the government's one-handed, one-sided take on the neonics issue. We're concerned about our bee populations; however, to cut neonics by 80% within two years without really negotiating or talking to the farmers about how that's going to affect them—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: What's that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): They're talking over there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sorry, Speaker. Well, Percy's listening.

The concern is the effects not just on cash crop farmers who are going to be affected by this, but on the environment per se. They're trying to protect the environment by protecting the bees, but a lot of farmers have told me that because of the use of neonics, they're able to transfer over into using no-till farming, which the government spent a lot of money on. Having cover crops increases the chances of having these pests.

By having these covering crops and no-till farming, you decrease erosion, you decrease having to use a lot of water, and you also decrease your carbon footprint on the farms. However, with this great change in the neonics, which isn't science-based, without discussion with the farmers whom it's going to be affecting, who at the end of day are probably going to need this insurance program in place because of the damage and policies this government has made—because of all of this, you're probably going to go back to till farming, you're probably going to get rid of a lot of the cover crops, because they're high-intensity, high-expense. Erosion is going to increase, the use of water is going to increase and the carbon footprint is going to increase. So what are the benefits to the environment at the end of the day?

The other thing I do like to make note of is that a lot of the cover crops, maybe alfalfa and such, probably have decreased, and a lot of these crops are bee-friendly crops—they're nutritious; whereas bees don't really like corn too much. It's not as friendly to them; it's not as nutritious to them. Most farmers have switched to these

corn crops because this government basically destroyed the horse racing industry within this province with its policies and what have you. A lot of people who used to grow the food for the horses have moved to something else, because there's no market for them anymore because of the decisions this government has made—which, at the end of the day, has destroyed a lot of the habitat for bees. So there are many other solutions that we could go forward with, helping the bees.

Back to this pool of money: The government's going to collect this money. Let's put it in a separate account so that they can get their hands off of it, because I'm worried about how they're going to spend it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning. On behalf of the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I would like to welcome the family of page captain Morgan Tamminga. We have her sisters Claire and Micah Tamminga. We also have grandmother Catherine McLean, grandfather Malcolm McLean and another grandmother, Juel Howse-McLean. Welcome to Queen's Park. Enjoy the festivities.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to introduce Antero Elo from the Finnish Credit Union; John Munnoch from the Adjala Credit Union; and Bob MacGregor from the Adjala Credit Union. I looked forward to meeting them. They are here with the Credit Unions of Ontario.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to welcome Jennifer Churchill from the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services to the Legislature today. They do amazing work each and every day. I want to remind the House of the reception they'll be holding today from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. Family members and children's treatment centres from around the province will be in attendance. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome students visiting us today from the PC Campus Association at Redeemer University. They are Josh Emmanuel, Chelsea Kaluzny, Keegan Fraser, Cha'wezi Phiri, James Constable, Ryan Vanderwees and Josh Broekema. I hope I got those right. Welcome.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome Kelly Harris from FirstOntario, and also give a shout-out to my good friends from Unifor Local 199, and to all the members from the credit unions, who do great work.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to welcome today, from Ducks Unlimited Canada, Lynette Mader, the manager of provincial operations; Greg Weeks, the Ontario director; and Ed Seagram. I know that the member from Simcoe North has a few that perhaps he is going to introduce as well.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, I welcome Ducks Unlimited here as well. I really wanted to point out that

they're actually having two receptions today: one at 12:30 in room 228, a coffee-break type thing, and their reception in the dining room from 4:30 to 7 o'clock tonight. Everybody is welcome.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce to the Legislature today Harry Joosten from the Libro credit union; Kam Raman from Central 1 Credit Union; and the former mayor of Windsor, Eddie Francis, who is now with Windsor Family Credit Union. They're here today with a delegation from Credit Unions of Ontario. I want to welcome them.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Taras Pidzamecky, Ukrainian Credit Union; Kelly Harris, FirstOntario Credit Union; Kam Raman, Central 1 Credit Union; and representatives of the Niagara Children's Centre.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure today to introduce, in the west members' gallery, from my riding, Jan Allardyce; and also, from the riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Morgan Tamminga, who is the page captain today. Her family is here: Malcolm McLean and Juel McLean; Catherine Tamminga; and Claire and Micah Tamminga, who are sisters of our page captain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think most members will know that the people from Ducks Unlimited are with us today, and I encourage people to meet with them. They do a lot of good work across this province.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome all the representatives from the credit unions of Ontario who are here at the Legislative Assembly. It's their advocacy day. I know they will be meeting with different MPPs. They do great work around the province, so I want to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Kelly Harris, who is representing FirstOntario Credit Union and represents my Kawartha Credit Union, which does a great job in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It gives me great pleasure to introduce John McGivney Children's Centre graduate and Paralympic swimming medal winner Danielle Campo McLeod and her mother, Colleen McLeod, who are here today to partake in today's play date for the Ontario Association of Children Rehabilitation Services.

I'd also like to welcome, from Windsor Family Credit Union, Marty Gillis and Steve Deneau; and also, my husband, Tyler, is in the members' gallery.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Good morning. I'd like to introduce Vaughn Courage, the page from Halton. Vaughn is page captain today, and he's right there across the gallery from me. Also here this morning is his mother, Ruth-Ann; father, Trent; and brothers Cade and Reif, who are over there in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Welcome to DU. I'm also going to introduce Kelly Harris because he's with FirstOntario down in my riding. But I do wish to introduce Ralph Luimes with the Haldimand-Norfolk credit union down in Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to also introduce Taras Pidzamecky, who is here in the gallery with us. He is a constituent of mine and the president and CEO of Ukrainian Credit Union and a leader in the community as well.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce a group from Wellington Heights Secondary School in Mount Forest who are here with Ducks Unlimited: Lisbet MacLean and Paisley Jansen, and their teachers Annalee Carberry and David Griffiths.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'm also pleased to introduce a number of people from the credit union movement from Etobicoke-Lakeshore: Linda Moroz from the Resurrection Credit Union; Alena Thouin from Alterna Savings Credit Union; Don Wright, Central 1 Credit Union; Scott Windsor, Meridian Credit Union; Sunny Sodhi, Meridian Credit Union; and George De La Rosa, Luminus Financial. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Today I'd like to invite to the Legislature for the credit union lobby event Peter Waller from the Kawartha Credit Union in my riding. Welcome.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome, from Kingston and the Islands, José Gallant from Alterna Savings, Alena Thouin from Alterna Savings, Dominique Biron-Bordeleau from Credit Union Central of Canada, and Rebecca Lickiss, an MBA student who used to work for me in my past federal life. Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to point out in the gallery that my good friend Marty Gillis is here from the Windsor Family Credit Union in Windsor-Tecumseh.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I apologize. I neglected to mention, also here from Ducks, in the members' gallery, are Krystal Hewitt, Laura Baldwin and Briar McBoyle.

M. Grant Crack: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les étudiants et étudiantes qui sont ici pour la neuvième édition du Parlement jeunesse de l'Ontario. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Merci, monsieur le Président.

I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Julie Cayley and Lynette Mader from Ducks Unlimited, whom I look forward to meeting with later today and invite everyone to join us for a reception at 12:30 in room 228. Welcome to Queen's Park.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have a house-keeping comment to make. It has been brought to my attention a few times while I'm sitting in the chair and while other deputies are sitting in the chair. I would like to remind all members: You would be doing us a huge favour by not making your devices available, even on vibration, on your desk, for two reasons. Number one: Even if your mike is not on, it still resonates and makes a distraction. Number two: When your mikes are on, our interpreters and our sound people get a huge blast in their ears, and it is actually quite harmful. I'm going to ask

you to please be cautious of that. If you have them, either put them on your lap or take them away.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. David Zimmer: Introduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I'd like to introduce Philip Holst, who is over here in the gallery. He's with Ducks Unlimited. He's a long-time friend and he's an enormous supporter and contributor to Ducks Unlimited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It is now time for question period.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Section 11.8 of the Liberal Party's constitution says that you, the leader, must communicate your decision—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. No interjections. I need to hear the question, because I'm listening carefully.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The constitution says that you, as leader, have to communicate your decision as soon as possible if you've made the decision to appoint a candidate.

You claim you made your decision in November, and you claim you told Mr. Olivier of your decision in December. Yet you didn't tell the riding association until January 7.

Premier, why did you breach your own constitution and wait for over a month to tell the riding association of your decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, let me be very clear. I've made this statement about my decision many times. It was well known that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate in Sudbury—and we're very pleased to have him. I formally wrote to the riding association president and nominations commissioner on the day of the by-election—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also want to hear the answers.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't want any more interjections from the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's when the paperwork was completed. But it was well known that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: During question period, you've repeatedly said, "I had made that decision at the end of November. Once I had met Glenn Thibeault, that decision was made." Yet Andrew Olivier told the OPP the conversation he had with you on December 11 was the same as the one he had had earlier that day with Gerry Lougheed Jr. In that conversation, he was being offered a job or a bribe to step aside as the candidate and to nominate Glenn Thibeault instead.

Premier, if you made the decision in November, why didn't you tell Andrew Olivier on December 11 that there would be no nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me say once again that once I had a meeting with Glenn Thibeault—because I hadn't met him. After all, he had been part of another party; he was making a decision about his future. Once I had met him, at the end of November, I made a decision that he would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury. That was the decision that I had made. The paperwork was completed in January, but it was well known long before that that Glenn would be the candidate for us in Sudbury.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: The taped conversations between Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed Jr. with Andrew Olivier stand in stark contrast to your statement that Andrew Olivier was told before December 11 that he would not be the Liberal candidate.

Premier, you've been repeatedly asked for evidence to back up your version of events. Your letter of January 7 tears even more holes in your implausible story.

You need to end this farce, stop denigrating the office that you hold and tell Ontarians once and for all: Did you authorize Pat Sorbara or Gerry Lougheed Jr. to have those conversations with Mr. Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, once again, I take this matter very seriously. The member knows that there's an investigation going on and that that investigation is happening outside of this House. It's an independent process.

I have to say that I actually agree with the PC House leader, who on February 27 said this: "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course."

The fact is that there's an investigation going on. I am going to let that investigation run its course, Mr. Speaker. But it's going to run its course outside of this Legislature, independently of the House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Associate Chief Justice Douglas Cunningham of Ontario Superior Court wrote, "Appointments to government offices ... are not to be traded for political favour. They are appointments that must be made in a fair, open and transparent manner."

Premier, you tried to sneak an appointment or a job offer to Andrew Olivier past the people of Ontario. It was not fair. It was not open. It was not transparent.

Again, did you direct Gerry Lougheed Jr. and/or Pat Sorbara to offer Mr. Olivier an appointment to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me again just say that I challenge the premise of the question and the statements that the interim Leader of the Opposition has made. I would remind him that there is an investigation going on. I would also remind him of what the Chief Electoral Officer said. He determined that the allegations against me and the member for Sudbury were baseless. He went on to say, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." He did not say that those are decisions for the interim Leader of the Opposition. Those are decisions for the people who are involved in the investigation, and we're going to let that unfold as it must.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Justice Cunningham has also said that the Criminal Code bribery provisions are "aimed at preventing influence peddling in order to protect the public's confidence in the integrity and appearance of integrity of the government."

Premier, according to a recent poll, the public's confidence in your integrity is pretty low. Two thirds of Ontarians want your deputy chief of staff to resign. Premier, will you restore some semblance of integrity to your office and step aside if charges are laid against either Pat Sorbara or Gerry Lougheed Jr.?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I made a statement two Fridays ago. I said that there were clear actions that needed to be taken if there were a charge laid against anyone and that Pat Sorbara would step aside if that were the case. That's in the public realm; I made it very clear.

I also said that there is an investigation going on. We need to let that investigation unfold. That investigation will unfold outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, your very own Gerry Lougheed Jr. once said, "A solution by fat cats in Toronto may not be the right solution for Sudbury." But you made the decision, Premier, to appoint a candidate from behind your desk here at Queen's Park. You were prepared to offer Mr. Olivier a government appointment or job so he wouldn't stand in the way of your decision.

Premier, you have sullied the integrity and the dignity of the office you hold. Salvage what little public confidence is left in you. Commit to the people of Ontario that you will resign as Premier if either Gerry Lougheed or Pat Sorbara is convicted of an offence of bribery.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've said clearly that I will co-operate with the authorities, that that investigation is taking place outside this House, and we need to let it unfold there. I will continue to work closely with the authorities, as is the right thing to do.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. On what date did the Premier provide the Liberal Party's nomination commissioner and Sudbury riding association president the written notice that she was appointing Glenn Thibeault as the Liberal candidate in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite, I think, knows full well, I have made many statements about my decision to have Glenn Thibeault as the candidate in Sudbury. I made that decision after I met him at the end of November.

I think the member opposite also knows that I formally wrote to the riding association president and nominations commissioner on the day that the by-election was called. That's when the paperwork was completed. The decision was made much before that, and it was well known that Glenn was going to be our candidate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: January 7, that's the date, almost a month after Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed were taped offering Andrew Olivier anything he wanted to step aside, almost a month after those phone calls were made on behalf of the Premier, almost a month after the Premier's own conversation with Mr. Olivier. There is now written evidence, in addition to taped evidence, that the Premier's story does not add up.

I ask the Premier: Will she have one more conversation with her soul, this time about the need to come clean with the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I say it was well known that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate, it really wasn't that long ago. There were newspaper reports; it was quite in the public realm that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate. I would just say to the member opposite that she can check the record and she can see. It's true that the paperwork was completed on the day that the election was called, but it was common knowledge long before that that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier insisted that she decided to appoint Glenn Thibeault long before the Liberal operatives were dangling jobs in front of Andrew Olivier, but the Premier's letter to the Liberal Party makes it clear that she only appointed Glenn Thibeault after those attempts had failed.

This is a question that the Premier has been asked 44 times, but she has not given a straightforward answer yet: Who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their orders to get Mr. Olivier out of the way so that Glenn Thibeault could have an uncontested nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say again that the investigation that's going on is going on outside of this Legislature. It's very important that it be independent and that we let that unfold.

In fact, the NDP member for Timmins–James Bay said last week, “You do have a larger responsibility to make sure you’re careful in the use of your words so you don’t interfere in any ... way.” That is the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I think if the leader of the third party would just turn to her right and talk to the member for Timmins–Bay, she would understand that it’s important that all of us—all of us—let the investigation take place outside.

I made a decision at the end of November that Glenn Thibeault would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury. I think that was the right decision.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. To confirm, to make sure he heard me, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

New question?

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. There is evidence that Andrew Olivier was offered any job he wanted in order to get out of the Premier’s way. There is evidence that Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed were acting on orders from the Premier, and there is evidence in black and white that the Premier made the decision to appoint her candidate after attempts to get Andrew Olivier out of the way failed.

Of course, the Premier still claims that all this evidence is wrong. Does the Premier have any evidence to support her version of the story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I challenge much of the premise of the leader of the third party’s question. I made a decision at the end of November, having met our candidate, having met Glenn Thibeault, that he would be the best candidate for the Liberals in Sudbury.

The people of Sudbury made a decision. The people of Sudbury voted for Glenn Thibeault. We have a new member on this side of the House because he was the best candidate for Sudbury. The people in Sudbury made that decision.

I know that’s painful for the third party; I understand the degree to which that’s painful. But the fact is, the people of Sudbury made a decision.

There is an investigation going on, and that investigation is going on outside of this House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Any Ontarian with a computer or a smartphone can hear the tapes of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed offering jobs to Andrew Olivier on behalf of this Premier. The OPP warrant is available publicly. Elections Ontario reported its finding that there is evidence that senior Liberals broke the Election Act, and that report is publicly available, Speaker. And now On-

tarians can read about a letter showing that the Premier didn’t appoint her candidate until after she found out that she could not get Andrew Olivier out of the way.

In that growing mountain of evidence, there isn’t a single shred that backs up the Premier’s version of events. Is there anything at all—anything—that the Premier can show us that backs up her version of this bribery scandal from Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, it was well known long before the paperwork was completed that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate. That’s a matter of public record. As I have said, the investigation that’s ongoing is happening outside of this House. We need to let it unfold in an independent way outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier seems to be more comfortable answering police questions than answering questions here in the Legislature. It’s getting quite ridiculous, Speaker. People actually deserve so much better than this. They deserve to know that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Breaking the law doesn’t matter to you?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get quiet for you to interject, member from Timmins–James Bay.

Please finish your question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They deserve to know that their politicians play by the rules. They deserve to know that the Premier of Ontario is going to answer questions and tell the truth without first receiving a subpoena or a warrant or being interrogated by the OPP. What evidence does the Premier have to back up her story?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I agree with the leader of the third party that the people of Ontario deserve to know that their politicians are going to answer questions, and I will do that. I will answer questions here and I will work with the authorities. I have said over and over again, first, when I made a public statement, I made it clear when I had made the decision and what that decision was: that Glenn Thibeault would be our candidate. I’ve also said that I will work with the authorities absolutely in every way that they ask of me and that they require, but I will do that outside of this House because that’s where the investigation is taking place. That’s where the authorities are, not here; they are outside of the House.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, are you familiar with this following quote: “I can’t fire them simply on the basis of charges”—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader.

Mr. Randy Hillier: “They have to have their day in court. They have to have a chance to prove their innocence. I have got to see more than this?”

Premier, does this quote sound familiar? Do you know what this quote is in reference to?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am sure that the member opposite is going to tell me chapter and verse exactly where that quote comes from.

In the meantime I will say to him that I've been quite clear that I will co-operate with the authorities. I've been quite clear that there's an investigation going on outside the House, and I made a statement about my position on all that two Fridays ago, and I continue to reinforce that in response to questions from the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Back to the Premier: Premier, I'm surprised you don't know who said that. Even I was surprised it wasn't you and it wasn't even your predecessor—although I'm sure he had said similar things many times.

It was disgraced president Richard Nixon discussing how he justified his actions in the David Frost interviews.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last time: Order, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Where's David Frost when you need him?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is tip-toeing very closely to a rope he doesn't want to hang himself with.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need any other interjections.

Please continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. Back to the Premier: That's from the infamous Frost/Nixon interviews surrounding Watergate. It sounds very, very much like the same phrase that we've been hearing from you.

Premier, you do know how that story unfolded. Is it your intention to disgrace this Legislature the same way that President Nixon disgraced his career and the White House when he served?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I ask the member opposite whether he recognizes the following two quotes: "I really don't have a comment to make on this because it's before the courts." Does he recognize who said that? It was just yesterday that the PC member from Whitby-Oshawa actually made that quote. We agree with her that when it comes to matters of anything criminal that we should let the independent authorities do the investigation.

Let me ask whether you recognize this other quote: "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation, and let it run its course." Who said that? That's the opposition House leader, the member from Leeds-Grenville, who said that. I agree with that quote as well.

We know that we have a system in place in this province where, if there are investigations that are ongoing, they are, by legislation, an independent process that is undertaken by prosecutors and by police. We should respect that process and let that independent investigation take place as opposed to commenting on it in the House.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier needs to tell Ontarians why she's insisting that she decided to appoint her Sudbury candidate in November. In December, the Premier's top insiders were dangling jobs in front of Andrew Olivier to get him to stop seeking the Liberal nomination.

1100

At that point, Andrew Olivier said there was no discussion and no decision about appointing. The president of the Liberal riding association said he hadn't heard anything about the decision to appoint. Gerry Lougheed said that the Premier didn't want to appoint, and Pat Sorbara made it clear that there was no decision to appoint.

Here is a letter from the Premier showing that there was no decision about appointing until January 2015. Why is the Premier insisting one thing when every single piece of evidence points to something else?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I think the Premier has answered the same question on several occasions, but let me just provide the member opposite, once again, with a primer on how our system works when it comes to issues like this. When it comes to, for example, any potential violation of the Ontario Election Act, as we know, the Chief Electoral Officer has the authority to do an investigation. When he does an investigation and he finds that there is an apparent contravention, he then refers that matter to the Attorney General for the public prosecutors to determine whether or not there should be any further action taken.

The public prosecutor then does his or her own investigation into the matter to decide, based on evidence, whether there should be any charges or not. If there are charges, then it's up to our judges in the courts to determine whether the person is guilty or not. That entire process is arm's-length and independent. We should respect that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is back to the Premier. This province—this Legislature—doesn't need any primer from Liberals about how to follow or break laws, because clearly you guys don't have a very good track record. So I say again: Andrew Olivier, Bill Nurmi, Pat Sorbara, Gerry Lougheed and the Premier's own letter all say that no decision had been made about appointing the Premier's chosen candidate in December. In fact, evidence shows that the decision didn't come until January.

Why has the Premier been insisting that she made a decision in November?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, in the same way, we don't need any primers from the NDP when it comes to bringing progressive policies in this province that make a difference in people's lives, because that's the party across which voted against increases for our hard-working personal support workers. This is the party opposite, the third party, that voted against raising wages for child care workers. This is the party across that voted against increasing the minimum wage and indexing it to the cost of living. That is the party that voted against increases to the child care benefit.

We don't need lectures from the third party, which has forgotten its progressive roots. This is the party—and this is the leader, Premier Kathleen Wynne—which is bringing progressive policies to improve the lives of Ontarians every single day. We will continue to do that, and make sure that there is retirement income security for hard-working Ontarians as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Labour. Ontario's first responders and health care professionals, including nurses, transit workers and correctional officers, have made it very clear: Ontario needs to do more to address traumatic mental stress in the workplace.

Recently I met with front-line nurses and physicians in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. They shared with me many challenges, like complexity of care and the diversity of issues that front-line health professionals face every day in their practice.

This past year, across Canada, first responders and others have been urging their governments to take action to address these growing concerns about traumatic mental stress in the workplace. We have all heard about tragic incidents, including firefighters and police officers who have taken their own lives because they have not been able to get the help they need. We all agree that we need to act to prevent this trend from continuing.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the province doing to ensure that employers are providing adequate support to employees who are suffering from traumatic mental stress?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that very important and very timely question. I think any of us in this House who have a friend, colleague or family member who is dealing with traumatic mental stress, post-traumatic stress disorder, understands the devastating effect this can have on people.

I would agree that we need to do everything we can as a Legislature, as a province, to ensure that workers get the support they need when they are forced to deal with work-related traumatic mental stress.

There's a growing amount of evidence that highlights the benefit of preventive initiatives when it comes to dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Our government takes work-related TMS very, very seriously. We engaged a round table of experts on traumatic mental stress. We've already begun acting on their proposed actions.

Tomorrow, we're holding a summit on work-related traumatic mental stress right here in Toronto to build upon the work of that round table. Speaker, that's going to attract some of the best and brightest minds on this topic to Toronto. I'd urge all members to try to attend for a portion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the minister.

It appears that our government is positioning itself on the right side of this issue to ensure Ontario's workplaces have the tools they need to address TMS.

I recently read that mental illness costs the Canadian economy \$52 billion annually in lost productivity and is the number one cause of disability claims in Canada.

Among those most disproportionately affected by mental health problems are new Canadians and recent immigrants. They face many cultural and linguistic barriers, both in the workplace and in trying to find proper treatment.

In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, there are a number of specialized agencies that serve the very diverse community, like the Hong Fook nurse practitioner clinic.

The discussions that will take place at tomorrow's summit on work-related traumatic mental stress will empower the participants to better serve my constituents and all Ontarians on how to overcome those barriers.

Speaker, through you to the minister: You mentioned earlier about hosting the summit tomorrow. Can you please elaborate on what that day will look like and who will be participating?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again for the question from the member.

The government is bringing together workers, employers, advocates, educators, change leaders and experts from a wide range of sectors at the summit tomorrow here in Toronto. More than 150 invited representatives will share the innovative approaches they have to promote cultural change. They'll learn from other industry leaders on how they can enhance mental health and the safety of their own employees.

Speaker, one of the highlights of the summit will be the keynote address by the great humanitarian Lieutenant General the Honourable Roméo Dallaire, who will speak about his first-hand experience with traumatic mental stress. If anybody has been an outspoken advocate, it's him.

The main goal of tomorrow's summit is not to start a conversation on traumatic mental stress. That conversa-

tion has already begun. Instead, it's about elevating that conversation to a higher level. I look forward to being part of it. I hope I see some of the members I'm hearing from at that summit tomorrow.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I have a question to the Premier about the Sudbury by-election.

Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer was very clear that he believed there was an apparent contravention of the bribery statute contained within the Election Act. Your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, is accused of bribery. Your backroom Liberal operative Gerry Lougheed was also involved in the alleged bribery.

It's illegal to grant government jobs or other positions as a favour.

Premier, why have you not removed Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just remind the member opposite—I'm sure he just neglected to read this part of what the Chief Electoral Officer said: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Dufferin-Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I take this matter very seriously. There is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While you were heckling, I indicated that I wanted you to come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I take this matter very seriously. As the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has said, there is a process. That process is being undertaken at this moment, but it's a process that takes place outside of this House. That's where the investigation is taking place, and that is exactly where it should take place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier: In our society, in the province of Ontario, we all believe in the rule of law. Justice is blind; no one is beyond it. Our rule of law is based on a set of strict principles to which we, as a society, all agree. Our rule of law is not arbitrary. Our rule of law is not subject to financial influence.

You, your friends and your hired operatives believe you are above the law. The fact is, if you break the law, you pay the price. We now have four OPP investigations into this alleged criminal activity, and this reflects badly on everyone.

Premier, for the good of all concerned, and if charges are laid, will you step aside?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I really appreciate that the member opposite talked about the rule of law, because I wish his other members would recognize what, in our system of democracy, the rule of law means. The rule of law, in our system, creates a clear distinction between the executive branch of the government and the judicial branch of the government.

By the same logic that the member opposite talked about, it is prohibited that we, the executive branch, get involved in the judicial branch of the system. That is a fundamental tenet of our rule of law. We have a separate judicial process in place right now. There is an investigation that is ongoing, and the only right and legal thing to do is to respect those investigations and not comment in this House.

So I urge all the members opposite: Let's get back to the issues that are important to Ontarians. Let's talk about issues that Ontarians are talking about, like building good public infrastructure.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Senior Liberals made offers to Mr. Andrew Olivier. The Premier is on record as saying that was okay because she had already decided to appoint her chosen candidate, that she was just helping Mr. Olivier. But the evidence shows something completely different. The evidence shows that the Liberals were desperate to get Mr. Olivier to withdraw from the nomination so that they could have an uncontested nomination meeting, and the letter to the president of the Sudbury riding association shows that there was never any decision until long after the attempts to get Andrew Olivier out of the nomination meeting had failed.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians the date she decided that she was going to appoint her chosen candidate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that there are members in the third party—

Hon. James J. Bradley: She's a sore loser.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —who understand that I have the authority and the ability, as the Liberal leader, to appoint candidates, and I made a decision after I had met Glenn Thibeault—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Scarborough—Guildwood.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've been pressed: The deputy House leader is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was the best person to be our candidate in Sudbury, and I made that decision after I had met him at the end of November. There is an investigation going on; it's going on outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The statement from the Premier has her kind of twisted in a knot where she's trying to explain that really, honestly and for real, she had decided to appoint her candidate in November but she didn't tell anyone. She didn't tell her campaign director. She didn't

tell her local kingmaker in Sudbury. She didn't tell her candidate. She didn't tell her former candidate, her riding association president or the Liberal Party, whose constitution makes it clear that she had to do so.

Is the Premier going to admit the date she decided to bypass the nomination meeting and go for an appointment? Because right now it looks like this date was in January.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite actually lives quite close to where all of this is taking place. I think that the member opposite could—if she looks back at the newspapers, she would know that it was pretty common knowledge that Glenn Thibeault was going to be our candidate. To suggest that that wasn't the case, I think, is just not accurate.

I had made a decision that Glenn would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury. There is an investigation going on. It's going on outside of this House and I'll continue to co-operate with authorities.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. I've had the privilege of advocating on behalf of my community at the federal level and now I have the privilege to do the same at the provincial level. This is a responsibility I take very seriously.

From knocking on doors in the past by-election, my constituents clearly identified the Maley Drive extension as an important infrastructure project for our community. I am now proud to say that I am part of a government that included this project, not only in the past budget but as part of its submission to the federal Building Canada Fund.

Would the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure please update this House about the important Sudbury infrastructure project?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, it is so good—almost refreshing—to see a member from the Sudbury area asking questions that really matter to Sudbury and really matter to Ontarians, so I thank the member for the question.

It's with great pleasure that I can say and confirm that this government is fully committed to our share of the Maley Drive project. We know that the project is very important to the people of Sudbury, as it will reduce congestion along two of the city's main arterial roads.

In our 2014 budget, our government committed up to \$26.7 million for the first phase of the expansion of Maley Drive. We highlighted this project again in our recent budget. The NDP had an opportunity to vote for this project in the first budget; they rejected it. They had a second opportunity; they rejected it again. We're looking forward to hearing from the federal government with an approval, so that Maley Drive can go through.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd also like to thank the minister for driving this important project forward. I, too, remain optimistic that the federal government comes to the table and commits to this project.

However, I saw first-hand when I was a member of Parliament that the federal Conservatives are not making adequate investments in infrastructure, not just in Ontario but across the country. They are shortchanging Ontarians and all Canadians.

Fortunately, this government and this Premier prioritize infrastructure. Our Premier is calling for a new Canadian infrastructure partnership, a collaboration that has the explicit target of investing 5% of GDP in infrastructure renewal.

Mr. Speaker, would the minister please inform the House about this drastic comparison between federal and provincial infrastructure spending?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: The federal government is not adequately investing in infrastructure. Since 2003, this government has invested nearly \$100 billion in infrastructure, and we're investing \$130 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years. That will create 110,000 jobs across this province.

Comparing our record to the federal government, over the next 10 years, our government plans to invest nearly five times more per capita in infrastructure than the federal government. You'd be hard-pressed to find a national government anywhere in the world doing so little, compared to the provincial governments across this country.

Our Premier is absolutely right: The federal government must commit more to a national infrastructure partnership. Projects like Maley Drive, the Ring of Fire and public transit need the federal government to commit more so that we can continue to compete in this fiercely globally competitive economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I'm glad to see your enthusiasm.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Since the very beginnings of this Sudbury by-election—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Let's reboot.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Since the very beginnings of this Sudbury by-election scandal, you have made many sad excuses for Liberals behaving in unethical ways.

From the response in my riding and, in fact, from all across this great province, I can tell you that Ontarians are saying that by your unwillingness to admit wrongdoing and dismiss those who are accused of criminal offences, you are diminishing the high office you hold.

Later today, our leader will address the House regarding his opposition day motion. Will you finally accept responsibility for defending Liberals under criminal investigation and acknowledge that, if you will not have them step aside, you are in fact breaching the public trust?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can assure the members opposite and anyone watching that we take this issue very, very seriously. We've heard the Premier, time and time again, talk about how any investigation should be conducted by qualified people outside of this Legislature. In fact, when asked about charges laid against a PC staff member just this week, the PC member from Whitby-Oshawa said, "I really don't have a comment to make on this because it's before the courts."

1120

The PC House leader agrees with the member from Whitby-Oshawa—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: He said, "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation. Let it run its course."

So we actually take the wisdom from the members opposite to heart—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —and we will not be discussing this in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, that was a sad and disappointing response from the Deputy Premier.

Premier, back to you: During your leadership speech you said that this is the time, right now, "to show that we've learned from our mistakes. That they will not happen again." By standing in the way of our opposition motion, you will show that this is the same tired, arrogant, unethical Liberal government that you inherited from Dalton McGuinty. You have put your own ego and the needs of your party before the needs of the people of Ontario.

Premier, I ask you again: Will you acknowledge the breach of ethics, stop stonewalling our efforts to get to the bottom of this scandal and put Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed in the penalty box, at least until this investigation is complete?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that what I find to be very disappointing is that both opposition parties have, for the last number of weeks, asked the same question over and over and over again. They have used their questions to do this muckraking instead of focusing on issues that matter.

We have people from the credit unions here today; they've got important questions. I think they'd like you

to be asking us questions about what they're here to discuss. We've had various people here—the children's treatment centres. I bet they have questions that they'd like you to be asking us.

You've asked the questions over and over again. You've had the same answer over and over again. I think you're letting your constituents down by not asking the questions they want to hear answers to.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

According to the evidence, the Premier decided to appoint her hand-picked candidate the same day that the writ was dropped. If the Premier is claiming she decided to appoint her hand-picked candidate in November, why did she wait until the eleventh hour to actually make that appointment?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: So let's understand this question. Good morning. The member is asking about why the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party didn't get the paperwork in when he thinks she ought to have done that. Now, I think that's a pretty big stretch.

Interjection: It's ridiculous.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: My colleague says it's a ridiculous question. I wouldn't say it's a ridiculous question, but it's not a question that pertains to government policy or government business. It's not a question, I'll bet, that the people in Windsor want their members to ask.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's not what I think the Premier should have done. Why didn't the Premier follow the Liberal constitution and inform the Liberal Party as soon as she made her decision to appoint her candidate? It's in the constitution, for God's sake.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's very clear that the nomination process in the NDP, the New Democratic Party, is not the same as it is in the Ontario Liberal Party. In the Ontario Liberal Party—because members of the party have voted constitutional rules that give the leader the ability to appoint candidates.

The NDP just ram through the candidate they want. They put someone in charge of the process and then that person, Adam Giambrone, ends up running for that nomination in Scarborough—Guildwood.

I don't like your way of doing nominations, but I'm not going to stand up and ask you about your party constitution in this place.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker, I understand that today is credit union advocacy day. We have members of credit unions from across the province visiting Queen's Park today and meeting with MPPs.

I had the wonderful opportunity to meet with members of credit unions from my riding of Newmarket–Aurora—Meridian—telling me about the wonderful things they are doing in our riding. They're telling us about the wonderful things they're doing in all of our ridings.

It's unfortunate that the opposition are not asking questions about the good work the credit unions do and the important role they play in our provincial economy.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Finance: What is our government doing to support this critical industry?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member for a great question. The member for Newmarket–Aurora has rightly cited how important the credit unions and caisses populaires are to the province of Ontario, to their communities and to our economy. We appreciate the outstanding work that the sector does for all of us concerned.

On behalf of all of my Liberal caucus members and colleagues, we recognize that in order for credit unions to continue to do their good work, we have to review their act.

I am very proud that my parliamentary assistant, Laura Albanese, the MPP from York South–Weston, is doing a tremendous job of consulting with communities right across Ontario in terms of what we should do to build Ontario up, looking at ways to continue providing that investment, those incentives, for businesses to invest, for consumers to build and create more jobs. That wouldn't be possible without the outstanding partnership with our credit unions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for that informative answer.

This review will assist credit union workers to continue to do their important work in building up Ontario's economy. I know in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, we value the work of credit unions. I see the important contributions they make to my community day in and day out.

But Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance please provide some more information on this important review that he has requested MPP Laura Albanese to lead?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you again to the member. Mr. Speaker, there are over 118 credit unions in Ontario serving 1.6 million members, employing over 6,000 people and holding over \$40 billion in assets. They deserve to ensure that the government, in partnership with them, will do what's necessary for them to continue to succeed: looking at deposit insurance coverage limits; looking at revisiting subsidiary ownership; reviewing and adopting Basel III capital requirements and inputs that they know are important; enabling innovation so that we can all do better; and ensuring that they are able to do even more business with more sectors of our economy, like the MUSH sector.

We hear you loud and clear. They're not asking you those questions; we will, and we'll fight for you as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

A reminder to all members that you're addressing your questions and answers to the Chair.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now that I have quiet, I'll say it again for those who didn't hear: In this place, you direct your questions and answers to the Chair. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Premier: You did not inform the Sudbury riding association of your intention to appoint a candidate for weeks, during which time your operatives Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed allegedly tried to bribe your former candidate with a public appointment so that your Liberal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy, come to order, and everyone else.

Please put your question.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Your Liberal operatives Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed allegedly tried to bribe your former candidate with a public appointment so that your Liberal nomination would go to your chosen candidate uncontested.

You breached your own party's constitution and your operatives allegedly broke the law, according to the Chief Electoral Officer. However, you stated that after your review, there will likely be no charges.

When did you offer yourself the appointment as prosecutor, judge and jury, and when did you ask yourself what to give up in exchange for this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I challenge the premise of some of the statements that the member opposite has made. I've been very clear that I will co-operate with the authorities. I take it very seriously. I made a statement that laid out my position, Mr. Speaker. I have said very clearly that this is an investigation that needs to take place outside of the House.

1130

I've also said very clearly that when I first met Glenn, I made a decision that he would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury. I think that was a very good decision, borne out by the fact that the people of Sudbury chose him as their representative here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, back to the Premier: Your office is subject to four OPP investigations. At this pace, investigators will need their own reserved parking spot at Queen's Park.

Your own candidates don't trust you to come clean—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I guess the truth hurts.

Your candidates don't trust you to come clean and have to release recorded tapes for the truth to come out. Andrew Olivier could not have been offered an appointment without your blessing, because you would have to

sign off on it. It shouldn't take police questioning and leaked tapes to get to the truth from the Premier of Ontario.

Did you decide to offer Andrew Olivier a public appointment in the time between your decision to appoint Glenn Thibeault as the candidate and your letter to the riding association?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I say that the investigation is taking place outside of this House, what I mean is that there will be questions asked and answered by authorities, by people who are qualified to ask those questions and then come to a conclusion.

I understand the politics of what's going on here. I understand why it's important to the Conservatives to ask these questions over and over, because they don't want to talk about what's going on in their leadership race. I understand that.

I understand why the NDP would want to ask these questions, because they don't want to talk about the fact that they lost in Sudbury and that they lost a member from the NDP, who walked across the floor and came to us. I understand the politics, Mr. Speaker.

But I will not be distracted from the reality that we have a lot of work to do on this side of the House. We have work in terms of investments. We have work in terms of getting a budget ready that will be in the best interests of the people of the province. I'll answer the questions that the authorities ask me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. Seeing as the Premier is unable to produce any evidence to back up her timeline of events, my constituents are wondering if she can provide any evidence on who gave Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed their orders to offer Andrew Olivier a job.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I go back to my previous answer: that I will answer and I will co-operate with the authorities in the investigation that's taking place outside of this House.

I understand the politics of what the NDP is doing right here. They don't want to talk about their own process. They don't want to talk about the painful reality that we put in place a progressive plan that drew an NDP member from the federal party into our party, and that put in place a plan for Sudbury and all parts of the province that is in the best interests of the economy and in the best interests of people in their day-to-day lives. They don't want to talk about that, so they're taking on the role of judge and jury in terms of work that is being done outside of this House.

The investigation is happening outside of this House. I will co-operate with authorities. In the meantime, I hope that the members opposite understand that that's the appropriate thing to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Premier: I guess "openness and transparency" has turned into "deflect, deflect, deflect." Every piece of evidence points toward bribery, but the Premier says, "No, we're only trying to help out our friends."

The Premier has been asked to provide evidence for her version of the story for more than two weeks. Let's try this once again: Is there any evidence for the Premier's version of events?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I guess, Speaker, the tactic of the NDP is to distract, distract, distract from the real issues that need to be dealt with in this province. They're trying to distract, distract, distract from their abysmal record in electioneering. They just can't catch a break. They can't win an election, and they're bitter about that. Their party members are asking about that. So what they're doing is, they're talking about every other issue possible, to deflect from their own dismal electoral politics, because they have forgone their progressive values.

We here in the Liberal Party, in the government, are working on things that are important to Ontarians, like investing in our personal support workers, like investing in our child care workers, like making sure that full-day kindergarten now is available to all four- and five-year-olds across the province. Now we're working on the most important issue, and that is to ensure that there's retirement income security for hard-working Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension, and investing in critical public infrastructure across the province so that our families can get to work and home—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

CHILDREN'S TREATMENT CENTRES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, staff and volunteers at children's treatment centres work hard to support children and youth with physical, communication and developmental needs. Children's treatment centres give young people the skills to be independent and live a happy and healthy life.

In my riding of Halton, ErinoakKids is doing wonderful work. ErinoakKids is Ontario's largest children's treatment centre, with approximately 600 staff in 10 locations. They provide a comprehensive range of support services to more than 14,500 Ontario children and their families. In Halton, they have taken over 500 children off their wait-list for core rehab services. That's 500 children who have received support in areas like autism services, occupational therapy or medical assistance.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how you're working to help children's treatment centres in their work?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member for Halton for raising this very important question. I was really hoping to get more questions today about children with special needs, because the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services is here—Jennifer Churchill and the folks from that organization, who do fantastic work. I was hoping for more from the opposition.

Having said that, I'm happy to get this question and I'm happy, of course, to acknowledge the new investments to reduce wait-lists for core rehab services and assessments. That brings my ministry's funding to \$101.4 million for the year 2014-15.

When I was parliamentary assistant two years ago, I travelled the province listening to families, service providers and researchers, and they helped us shape and form the special needs strategy for us. It's very important work. I'm just so happy the association is here. We'll be meeting with them later today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question, again, through you, is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, I'm pleased to hear about how much our government is doing to improve funding for children's treatment centres such as ErinoakKids. This means a great deal to constituents in my riding, many of whom have expressed their appreciation of our government's commitment to improving the lives of children throughout the province. This support is invaluable to the children and their families, who are working to meet the challenges of everyday life.

Minister, can you tell me what is being achieved through our increased funding for children's treatment centres?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks again to the member for the question. Late last year, my ministry invested an additional \$5 million per year—every year, Speaker—to help children's treatment centres reduce wait-lists and core rehab services in time to get to that.

We've also invested \$1.2 million this year to help the treatment centres further reduce time on the wait-lists and time to get assessed. This has expanded access to physio, occupational therapy and speech language therapy. It has enabled children's treatment centres to serve an additional 2,000 children and youth across the province. Increased funding of almost \$7 million over the next two years for preschool speech and language will help over 10,000 children across the province reduce wait times for speech and language. We look forward to continued investments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question?

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier, but I hope you can give me some leeway, Speaker. Today is my fifth anniversary of being elected as an MPP. As

well, five years ago, the Minister of Energy was elected, and I want to congratulate him on the award that his ministry received today. They got a Canadian Taxpayers Federation Teddy award for government waste for the smart meter program. So congratulations and happy anniversary.

Listen, we've got an opposition day motion today. Premier, you can pre-empt it. We've asked these questions in the House. You've got a tremendous opportunity to do the right thing, show some integrity in your office by asking Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed to step aside.

Are you going to do it, Premier? Please do it before today's opposition day motion.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased that the member referred to smart meters, and I'm very pleased to speak about that issue, Mr. Speaker.

We have one of the best electricity systems in the world. We were cutting edge when we installed 4.8 million smart meters in our system. It enables us to do tremendous work. First of all, smart meters eliminated about 2,000 jobs by not having to have people walk door to door to read meters. We have a new generation, a generation that those people over there don't understand. They make jokes about smart meters. It's saving people money.

Interjections.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Well, I would challenge each member of the Conservative Party over there: Which one of you is not using—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, another answer that's not very smart in this Legislature.

Premier, you could really take this seriously. You and I have had a lot of questions over the last few days. We've got an unprecedented report from the Chief Electoral Officer. You forced our hand today with our opposition day motion but, Premier, you still have time. You still have an opportunity to do the right thing and show some integrity in your office.

Remember, you're the one whose throne speech said in this House that you were going to do things differently. You were going to do things differently than your predecessor, but all we're seeing and hearing in question period day after day after day is the same old, tired Liberal rhetoric.

Premier, do the right thing. Show the leadership that you said you would in this House. Ask those two individuals to step aside and try to renew some semblance of respect back into your office.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, referring to his reference to smart meters: They alert utilities when lines go down, saving tremendous money for all of the utilities across the province. They redirect electricity to restore power outages. They improve billing accuracy, and they enhance the efficiency of the system in many other ways.

Toronto Hydro has confirmed that it has reduced consumption by 3%. There have been other studies that have shown tremendous savings to consumers. We're very proud of the technology. We're cutting edge. Leading electricity systems across the world are copying what we're doing here in Ontario.

VISITOR

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Harry Joosten here today—a Londoner from Libro Financial and a great citizen of London.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know this isn't in order, but I want to wish one of my favourite people in this world a very happy birthday today. Bob McLean, aka Daddy Bob, aka Bobby Mac, aka Mac Daddy, turned 79 today. Bob is my brother Mike's father-in-law and is a personal hero of mine. He has dedicated his entire life to working with disadvantaged people as a social worker and an ombudsman who advocates for the most disadvantaged in our society. I want to say happy 79th birthday to Daddy Bob. We love you—and a shout-out to Mama Mac. I hope you're watching today. Happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was an intro, not a statement; right? Okay, it's an introduction.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today Damian Tran. Damian is here today representing his school as part of his grade 12 leadership activity study from all French public schools in the province. Welcome to Queen's Park, Damian.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FEDERATED WOMEN'S INSTITUTES OF ONTARIO

Mr. Jim Wilson: This year marks the 118th anniversary of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. It marks 118 years since Adelaide Hoodless first began her campaign for domestic science education, inspired by the tragic death of her 14-month-old son; and 118 years since Erland Lee, a local farmer, saw Hoodless's vision, and with his wife supported the foundation of the women's institutes. It was because of Hoodless's tireless efforts and vision for reform that domestic science and sewing were first added to the school curriculum.

Today, the Federated Women's Institutes have over 3,500 members in 290 branches across Ontario.

I know, through my very good friend Donna Jebb, who serves as president of the women's institute for Simcoe county and has been a member of that branch for

over 30 years, that this organization has become much more than just about improving the homemaking skills of women. While still firmly entrenched in its beginnings, today the women's institute, as well, runs education and support programs and services, offers personal growth opportunities, health and community wellness projects, and engages in government lobbying.

In my riding, the women's institute sponsors two scholarships each year, awarded to students pursuing post-secondary education who are active volunteers in the community.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario on the excellent work that they have done and on the many things they have achieved. I look forward to seeing the great things that the institute will accomplish in the next 118 years and to being a part of their growing success.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: More and more people are waking up every day and realizing they're being gouged by the gas companies in this province, as they are across this country. How do you explain that the price of a barrel has dropped to about \$50 a barrel and yet the price of gas keeps on increasing? Currently, in Timmins, the price of gas is \$1.14 a litre. We were paying \$1.14 a litre when the price of gas was \$80 a barrel. What gives? What gives is that gas companies are gouging the public, and we, as legislators, have a responsibility to protect consumers.

If these gas companies are not prepared to do what is right and to make sure that their price of gas at the pump properly reflects the price of the barrel, then it is up to the province because we are the regulators of energy, not the federal government. They deal with the competition issue; we deal with the regulation issue.

The province should do what New Democrats have said for a long time and do what we do with natural gas, do what we do with electricity, do what we do with a box of beer. If you can buy a box of beer in Cornwall and pay the same price up in Fort Frances, certainly to God we can find a way to make sure that the price of gas in this province reflects the true price of the barrel, allowing companies to make a profit without gouging the pockets of drivers in the province.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: As I've said in this House on several occasions, my riding of Cambridge is built on a foundation of manufacturing. I rise today to welcome a new manufacturing partner to my community.

Chances are that if you're taking off or landing on a plane in Ontario, that plane's landing gear—or part of it—was manufactured in my community of Cambridge.

Last Thursday, aerospace manufacturing in Cambridge grew once again as I was in attendance at the inauguration of Héroux-Devtek's new Cambridge manufacturing facility along with the Minister for Economic Develop-

ment, Employment and Infrastructure. This new facility was built to accommodate a major new contract awarded by Boeing to supply complete landing gear systems for several Boeing aircraft.

This state-of-the-art facility will result in the creation of 40 new, highly skilled jobs and represents a total investment of approximately \$54 million, including \$7 million of support from the province of Ontario.

During our tour, I noted that there was one machine that uses such specialized skills that only about a dozen people worldwide are qualified to operate it. I'm proud of our government, which is taking a proactive role in helping ambitious companies to grow and create jobs in Cambridge.

Speaker, I'm delighted to work with and welcome Héroux-Devtek to Cambridge's business community. They join Cambridge's diversified economy, and its growing technology and advanced manufacturing sector.

BRUCE GOULET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand today to pay tribute to one of the most respected community builders in my riding, Mr. Bruce Goulet. Bruce served as North Bay's mayor from 1971 to 1973. Before becoming mayor, he served as an alderman and deputy mayor. I am privileged to be able to call him a mentor and my friend.

Now 92 years of age, Bruce was recently one of the 50 Canadians recognized for their contributions to civic life and duty in our country. As part of our country's special celebration of the 50th anniversary of Canada's flag, on Bruce was presented with a special Canadian flag, on behalf of Prime Minister Harper, by our member of Parliament, Jay Aspin, at a ceremony last week that I was privileged to attend.

I believe Bruce spoke for all of us in attendance when he said, "If there was a city within Ontario that embodies the best in citizenship and public service, it would be North Bay." I couldn't agree more.

On behalf of the residents of Nipissing, I want to say to Bruce, thank you for your years of dedication and commitment to North Bay, my friend, and for your steadfast leadership within our community. Thank you for everything, Bruce.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to acknowledge the worldwide event of International Women's Day on Sunday, March 8. As we know, International Women's Day is our opportunity to celebrate the progress and achievements in women's economic, political and social equality. It is vital that we celebrate our achievements while continuing to work towards equity for all women around the world.

For my part, I am proud of the strides New Democrats have made under the leadership of Andrea Horwath in promoting and electing women candidates. The NDP has the highest percentage of women elected out of any

political party, at 51%, and that is an accomplishment that we can celebrate.

However, we must balance the celebration of our achievements against the significant obstacles that still remain in almost every country, even prosperous countries like Canada. Here at home we see the persistence of violence against women, lack of pay equity and the underrepresentation of women in positions of decision-making and leadership, all of which demand our reflection. Around the world, women are still facing enormous challenges with poverty, health, economic independence, education and human rights.

If our moral imperative does not compel you to action, then perhaps economic indicators can. It is widely recognized that women have the potential to be the engine of economic and development success, and now is the time to take action.

1510

This March 8, I encourage all members of this House to celebrate International Women's Day and to reflect on their own commitment to the equality of all women.

360°KIDS

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's an honour to stand in the House today to represent the great riding of Newmarket-Aurora and to bring awareness to an event happening in York region. On the evening of March 5, I'm participating in the second annual 360° Experience. This will give me and 50 other community leaders an opportunity to spend a night in the cold to experience just a bit of what homeless youth face every night in York region.

The number of homeless youth in York region is staggering. An estimated 300 youth have, on any given night, no safe place to lay their heads. They are homeless.

For over 25 years, 360°kids has given the youth of York region the opportunity to move from the street to homeless shelters, while offering counselling, positive mentorship programs and employment opportunities. The name 360°kids highlights the approach the 25-year-old organization takes to assist at-risk youth. It recognizes that these youth need a wide range of supports to help them rebuild their lives.

I want to congratulate 360°kids on exceeding their fundraising goal of \$50,000. The last time I checked their website, they had hit \$65,000 and were still growing.

Mr. Speaker, homelessness, especially youth homelessness, is an issue near and dear to my heart. I am participating in this event to help the association and to raise awareness of youth homelessness in York region. One day it will be eradicated.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: The actions of this Liberal government are threatening health care services in the Quinte region. Today, Quinte Healthcare, which operates hospitals in Belleville, Trenton, Picton and Bancroft, announced plans to eliminate its \$8.5-million funding gap.

The reduction forced by this Liberal government will result in the axe falling on 10% of the nurses at Quinte Healthcare hospitals. Those 58 or so nurses were responsible for 88,000 hours of nursing care at our local hospitals. The reason given for these cuts is the government and Quinte Healthcare have said they are moving toward an interprofessional staffing model.

The government has also said that it's moving more services back into the community, except the numbers don't back that up, either. A spokesperson for the nurses at Hastings Manor and other long-term-care facilities in the area says these facilities are understaffed and the government has said, "Don't expect any more money." Nursing advocates have stated that home care services in our community can't be delivered in a timely manner.

Patients in Quinte deserve proper health care services, not nursing cuts without a home care safety net; not understaffed hospital floors. That's what happens when you blow billions of dollars on things that aren't priorities.

It's clear that more money needs to be invested in front-line health care providers, but the Liberal government continues to invest in bloated bureaucracies and not tackle the big issue, which is the need to streamline administration.

EPILEPSY

Mr. Granville Anderson: In December, I had the pleasure of meeting two very passionate individuals who hail from my riding of Durham. They brought to my attention a very important cause and a very important issue. These representatives from Epilepsy Durham Region are part of a very small team who are doing very big work. I wanted to rise to bring to the attention of this House their effort to showcase March as Epilepsy Awareness Month.

Epilepsy Awareness Month is an opportunity to acknowledge the one in 100 Canadians who are affected by epilepsy and the more than 100,000 Ontarians with this condition. They will be standing in solidarity throughout the month, as well as on March 26, when I encourage constituents and members of this House to wear purple to mark Purple Day, a national day of action for epilepsy. Together, we can be more conscious of the condition and help to end the misconceptions around it.

I am proud to see such passion for such a cause in my riding. I am proud that Epilepsy Durham Region will be hosting many events throughout the month, such as the purple pancake breakfast two weeks ago in Bowmanville.

I want to thank Epilepsy Durham Region for their hard work and encourage everyone to go to their website, epilepsydurham.com, to learn more and to get involved.

ORLÉANS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CHAMBRE DE COMMERCE D'ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Earlier this year, I was proud to be in attendance at the Orléans Chamber of

Commerce's 13th annual Business Excellence Awards. We had 13 key award winners who I have taken the time to congratulate individually. There were many wonderful finalists, and I want to express my gratitude to all local businesses for their hard work in our community.

Small businesses are the lifeblood of Orléans. I can say, as a former business owner, that the work that is done by the chamber of commerce in Orléans is extremely vital to foster entrepreneurship and economic growth in our communities.

Je suis toujours très fière de célébrer les succès de nos entreprises locales, et surtout de reconnaître leurs initiatives.

I'm also proud to support a dynamic and innovative business climate in Orléans to help them continue thriving.

I have to take this opportunity to wish all the best of success to the former executive director, Jamie Kwong, as she moves on to a new opportunity, and to welcome the new executive director, Mr. Dina Epale.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE POÈTE OFFICIEL DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Hatfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario / Projet de loi 71, Loi visant à créer la charge de poète officiel de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The bill establishes the Office of the Poet Laureate of Ontario, and the qualifications and selection process for the poet laureate are set out. The responsibilities of the poet laureate include promoting art and literacy, celebrating Ontario and its people, and raising the profile of Ontario poets.

SUPPLY ACT, 2015

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2015

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 / Projet de loi 72, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, I'll pass on that. Thank you, Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'll be speaking in my capacity as the minister responsible for women's issues this afternoon, because March 8 is International Women's Day in Ontario and our government is committed to realizing an Ontario where women and girls can achieve their full potential.

I'm proud to celebrate the many accomplishments and contributions women have made to economies, communities and societies around the world, and in our country and in our province. Our government believes in full equality and advancement of women and girls, and we're committed to helping them reach their full potential.

1520

Along with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I'd like to focus today on the very serious issue of violence against aboriginal women and girls. Aboriginal women and girls are at a greater risk of violence. This government demonstrated its commitment to the safety of women just last week, when Ontario participated at a national round table on missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

Violence against women is a complex issue. Violence against aboriginal women and girls is even more complex. There are many other factors that must be addressed in order to end these tragic incidents, factors surrounding poverty reduction, public education and community policing.

In Canada, aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-aboriginal women. In Canada, aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than a non-aboriginal woman is. The May 2014 RCMP report on murdered and missing aboriginal women states that police records for murdered and missing aboriginal women totalled 1,181 cases between 1980 and 2012. These losses not only affect aboriginal communities, they affect all of us, and it's absolutely unacceptable. Our government is committed to seeing that all women in Ontario are safe in their homes, their workplaces and their communities.

We demonstrated this commitment, as I said, just last week, when our Premier led the Ontario delegation to the national round table on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls that was held in Ottawa. We were so honoured to be in the presence of families, to hear their voices and for them to share their tragic stories with us. Though we felt that more could be achieved coming out of that round table, I'm pleased that the federal govern-

ment has agreed to work together on a pan-Canadian public awareness and prevention campaign that focuses on changing attitudes on this important issue.

Here in Ontario, we're also proposing a socio-economic action plan for aboriginal women and girls, supported by leaders of Canada's provinces and territories and national aboriginal organizations, to address the real root causes of the violence. It's important that we take additional actions, as our Premier has outlined, including expanding the community safety plan initiative with an emphasis on specific rural, remote, reserve settlement and urban community focuses; work on improving information-sharing processes across agencies; setting targets for reducing the number of aboriginal children in care; making victims feel better supported through more effective victims' services support programs; and finally, it's important that we improve on community engagement protocols and move on cultural competency training.

Our participation at the round table showed continued support for the calls on the federal government to convene a national inquiry, something which it still refuses to do. We will continue to call on the federal government to convene a national inquiry; we feel that is something very important that needs to happen. The government can't wave a magic wand. We know that a wand can't eradicate violence in one fell swoop. We need to continue to work with our aboriginal partners and across government to achieve our goal.

We've actually begun a lot of this work right here in Ontario. Five years ago, we formed the Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women, a unique coalition of five aboriginal organizations and 10 Ontario government ministries working together to end violence. The joint working group is currently developing a long-term strategy to address violence against aboriginal women and girls, with a focus on community-based initiatives.

We'll also continue to invest in public education and training led by aboriginal organizations. One of those programs is called I Am a Kind Man, a campaign that encourages aboriginal men and youth to speak out against violence. Our aboriginal partners have developed vital programs and services to prevent violence and support survivors as they heal. To our partners, I say thank you.

We know more needs to be done. Very shortly, our government will release a sexual violence and harassment action plan that will include important provisions for the protection of all Ontario women, including aboriginal women and girls. We can do so much more if we come together as governments, and aboriginal communities will join us and share their experiences and best practices. This is one of our hopes coming out of the round table in Ottawa last week.

We'll continue to work for peace, we'll continue to work for justice, so that all women and girls can live free from fear of violence.

I will now ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to further outline the government's commitment to the safety of aboriginal women and girls in our province.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I'm happy today to share some of the outcomes from the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls held last week. This was a unique opportunity to hear from family members of missing and murdered aboriginal women, aboriginal organizations, other provinces and territories and the federal government. It was also an opportunity for Ontario's delegation to put forward some concrete actions to address this issue.

Violence against aboriginal women and girls must stop. We know there is no single solution to this heart-breaking violence and that the root causes must be addressed. It's going to take continued collaboration and commitment across all levels of government and all aboriginal partners to put an end to this senseless violence. We need to change the attitudes that normalize and perpetuate violence against aboriginal women and girls. So we are joining aboriginal communities in supporting a pan-Canadian public awareness and prevention campaign which aims to do just that, Speaker.

We also called for full support of a socio-economic action plan to address housing, child care, education and economic opportunities for aboriginal women. These are essential elements in reducing poverty on- and off-reserve.

Violence against aboriginal women and girls affects First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities across the country. While provinces and territories, including Ontario, have launched their own initiatives, there is a clear and continuing need for a coordinated national response to end this violence.

Speaker, our government has long supported aboriginal organizations in Ontario, as well as the National Aboriginal Organizations, in calling for more action from the federal government on this devastating issue. Our government has long been a strong voice at the national level in calling for an end to this violence. In fact, Ontario and our aboriginal partners have been sharing our experience, advice and approach with other provinces and territories through the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group since 2009.

In 2013, Ontario hosted the Council of the Federation, and the Premiers around the table backed the call by the National Aboriginal Organizations for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. Last October, during the National Aboriginal Women's Summit, Ontario once again reiterated its support for a national public inquiry.

Speaker, last week's National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was unprecedented. The attendance of federal ministers Leitch and Valcourt was noted. However, there does need to be an ongoing engagement from the federal government on this issue. Ending violence and addressing the large number of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls cannot be addressed in isolation—cannot be addressed in isolation. The federal government often points to its Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls as

its response. Speaker, that's a good first step, but it was created without engaging National Aboriginal Organizations or the provinces or the territories. Much more is needed. The federal government needs to work in partnership with other jurisdictions and all aboriginal organizations. They also need to provide First Nations with the resources they need to police their communities.

The high rates of violence experienced by aboriginal women and girls is unacceptable to all Canadians. Too many aboriginal women and girls are living in fear of this potential and actual violence.

The Ontario delegation was a strong speaker at the round table, made up of Premier Wynne, Minister MacCharles, Minister Naqvi and myself, and representatives of the joint working group, and the family members of the missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

1530

Speaker, we put forward concrete actions shoulder-to-shoulder with aboriginal partners to raise awareness, support victims and address the root causes of this violence. Our government will continue to call on the federal government and will continue to be an engaged partner with all of the other provinces as we develop a truly national plan to end this violence.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to mark Social Work Week in Ontario.

Social Work Week is recognized across Canada as an opportunity to pay tribute to the ongoing contribution that tens of thousands of social workers make every day, assisting and supporting people who are facing hardships in their lives. This week is also the time for more than 14,000 social workers in Ontario to celebrate their achievements and receive well-deserved recognition for the valuable work they do.

I'm pleased to have with us today in the Legislature Joan MacKenzie Davies, executive director, and Gillian McCloskey, associate, from the Ontario Association of Social Workers.

This year's theme, Mobilizing Strengths in Individuals and Communities, highlights the significant role that social workers play in helping people improve the quality of their lives and achieve their goals. We, as a government, hope to mobilize the strengths of Ontarians and our communities, and in order to do so, we rely on the professionalism of social workers at the front line to help make that a reality.

Two weeks ago, I visited the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre. This organization is a large, multiservice centre located in the west end of Ottawa, serving both rural and urban populations. The main location houses several programs, including a bully prevention program, an Ontario Early Years Centre, services for seniors and adults with a physical disability, counselling, victims' services and referral services. This visit allowed me to see, first-hand, the terrific work that the 25 social workers on staff there do.

In many cases, including at the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre, it is social workers who actually transform our policies and programs into services for people every day in communities across Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I know that social work is a proud and noble profession. As a health care professional, I worked alongside many social workers before I became an MPP, and I have seen how incredibly rewarding it can be when you offer hope and provide the supports required for people to rebuild their lives.

Our government is proud to support social workers. Our latest budget demonstrated that support, with increased access to training dollars for front-line community agency workers. We're also working with the Ontario Association of Social Workers and the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers to find opportunities to support additional training and professional development for their members.

We share the goals of this commemorative week: to make our communities strong, where everyone has an opportunity to be included.

As we join social workers in recognizing this special week, I want to personally thank all social workers across the province for all that they do. I invite all honourable members to join with me in recognizing the enormous contributions that social workers make to our lives and to our province each and every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It is now time for responses.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to address the update on the national round table on murdered and missing aboriginal women.

There's no doubt that the numbers and emerging stories we hear surrounding the occurrence of missing and murdered aboriginal women in Canada and in Ontario are startling and call out for action. That said, I think it's important to understand what has been done to answer that call, what is being done and what we can do to move it forward.

Aboriginal leaders met with federal and provincial leaders last week to tackle this issue of violence against aboriginal women. The meeting produced a framework committing to a dialogue on prevention and awareness, safety in First Nations communities, and policing and the justice system. The group also agreed to meet again before the end of 2016 to discuss progress.

These steps work towards the information that was gathered during the RCMP national operational overview on missing and murdered aboriginal women, whose findings were released in May 2014.

The RCMP's findings provide important data about how the perpetrators of these heinous crimes abuse their victims. The RCMP found that 62% of homicides of aboriginal women were committed by a family member who had previously abused the victim, and 44% of those

who murdered aboriginal women had consumed intoxicants prior to committing the crime. Again, those numbers are disproportionately higher when compared with non-aboriginal females.

The RCMP study is one of some 40 studies already completed dealing with missing and murdered aboriginal women. Over 500 recommendations have been made through these 40 reports that are obviously not doing what they should be doing.

This action plan will also be coordinated with the federal government's commitment of \$25 million to continue to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls.

I will say that it's always very easy to point to other levels of government, other jurisdictions, to call for action and demand accountability. But I do feel that when these issues are occurring in our own backyard, it's important, when we call for action, that we have a responsibility to understand fully the steps being taken as they impact issues here at home. And here at home, the issues cry out for action.

Part of the framework discussed last week focused on prevention and awareness. That begins with our younger generations. In Ontario, aboriginal suicide is quite high. I was startled to read some statistics from the children's advocate. Between 1986 and 2011, there were 341 suicides involving children, youth and adults between the ages of 10 and 30 in the Sioux Lookout First Nations region of northern Ontario.

We have talked about this issue in the province before, but in my opinion, we can do better.

More than a year has passed since a jury announced 103 recommendations to improve child protection in Ontario following the death of five-year-old Jeffrey Baldwin, who died under his grandparents' supervision in Toronto. To date, only 20%—22 out of 103—of the recommendations were reported back as having been “implemented” or “to be implemented.” Over one third—38 out of 103—of the recommendations were reported as being still “under consideration.” These recommendations would benefit all children, including aboriginal youth.

The Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's mandate includes making efforts to include diverse voices, such as those of aboriginal background.

I look forward to hearing from the experts on this topic at the committee and the work that we will be able to put forward on this topic.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to bring greetings, on behalf of the PC caucus, in regard to social service worker day. I applaud those people who rise above and beyond their job descriptions every day to ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society are served and protected, from front-line responders in mental health who assist people in times of crisis to rescuing children from abusive homes. But, sadly, Mr. Speaker, I do have

to share today that I'm concerned in regard to a lot of our social services: the SAMS program and the challenges that it has presented to our front-line workers and, more importantly, those people who need the services.

Victim services in my riding were cut, and I wonder what's going to happen to all the families who are impacted by that—people I meet on the wait-list for developmental services. I question, again, where's the compassion? Where's the respect for these critical community services?

I respectfully suggest to the government and the minister that the only way to help our social workers on the front lines and those vulnerable people they serve is to, first and foremost, stop cutting their services. This year's theme, Mobilizing Strengths in Individuals and Communities, supports that notion. I know that a lot of my friends and family who either work in social services or have benefited from their great services support it: people like Phil Dodd at Keystone, Ryan Thompson at Grey county, my niece Trudy Walker at the London children's aid, Rick Hill and Libby Ipsen from Community Living.

To all of you on the front lines, we owe you gratitude for your personal and professional commitments to bettering our society every day.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my privilege to rise today, on behalf of the NDP caucus, to join indigenous leaders, members of aboriginal communities and people across Canada in calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Last May, we learned from the RCMP that almost 1,200 indigenous women and girls in Canada have been murdered or gone missing since 1980. Indigenous women are three times more likely than non-indigenous women to report being a victim of a sexual crime and four times more likely to be murdered. These are mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts and friends who have been failed by our system, their lives devalued. They have been failed by a justice system that incarcerates them for poverty, by a health system that ignores their lived experiences, and by a social service system that stigmatizes and abandons them.

1540

Their families have been failed by our collective refusal to acknowledge the reality of what is happening to indigenous women and girls, by our complicity in blaming individual victims or their communities and by our unwillingness to hold governments to account.

This is a national tragedy and a national shame. These women may not be high on the radar of the federal Conservative government, but they deserve to have their stories told. Their families deserve the closure and the healing that a national inquiry can bring. Their communities deserve a pan-Canadian, coordinated effort to end the violence and prevent the harm.

Last week, the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women released a report on 58 stud-

ies that have been conducted into missing and murdered indigenous women, and the 700 recommendations that have been made. The report concludes that violence against indigenous women is a sociological issue and that a national commission is desperately needed to understand why governments have resisted taking action.

Speaker, this must not be a question of resources. Families of missing and murdered indigenous women should not have to choose between the search for justice through an inquiry and the proactive, coordinated implementation of actions to address root causes.

New Democrats stand with the families of these missing and murdered women to demand an independent national inquiry. We stand with all our sisters to call for a national dialogue to examine the structures of violence against indigenous women and the way they intersect.

But let me be clear: An inquiry is the beginning, not the end. It must be accompanied by formal commitments from both the federal and Ontario governments to act on the findings and implement the recommendations, just as we would demand if these women were white.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm proud to stand here today as a New Democrat to honour social workers across the province on Social Worker Week. This year's theme is Mobilizing Strengths in Individuals and Communities, and this is precisely what our social workers across this province do. They mobilize the strengths in individuals, in groups, in communities who have been marginalized and who find themselves on the fringes of our society.

I'd like to take this time to especially honour those very workers who have, day in and day out, in light of this government's recent SAMS nightmare, come to the front lines. This \$240-million-plus SAMS debacle was one that social workers across the province warned ministry officials about from the get-go, and instead of heeding warnings, the government ignored them.

In the last few weeks our social workers have been on the receiving end of this. They were thrown onto the front lines, having to work many hours of overtime in order to backtrack on preventable errors and had to be the ones to explain to hundreds of recipients about security breaches involving social insurance numbers and private information.

Katherine Chislett, the commissioner of community social services for the Niagara region, when I visited there recently, pointed out to me the incredible commitment and the daily life-changing service that the ODSP and Ontario Works workers delivered during this difficult time. They're committed to continuing to serve those who need it.

Melanie Leroux is one of those, an ODSP worker who went above and beyond her regular duties to ensure that a constituent in my riding who had fallen through the cracks got their problem corrected in a timely manner. But she isn't the only one. I wish there was time here to recognize each of them today. There are examples of

dedicated service of social workers across the province, no doubt.

Mr. Speaker, our social workers, whether they work in health care, FACS or community and social services, require necessary supports from government, supports that will empower them with the necessary tools to ensure that they can deliver life-changing care, in the face of incredible hardships, to the people in the province who need it most.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements and comments. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site; and

“Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

“Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

“Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

“Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

“Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre - Restorative Care, Chesley Site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact.”

I fully support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Fardin.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas this uncompetitive tax will not impact business outside Ontario and will only serve to accelerate the demise of our once strong manufacturing sector; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To abandon the idea of yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I agree with this and will be passing it to page Morgan.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, worsens over time and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there is an estimated 208,000 Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease creates emotional, social and economic burdens on the family and supports of those suffering with the disease—over 25% of those providing personal supports to survivors of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia are seniors;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020; and

“Whereas Ontario’s strategy for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia has not been revised since the implementation of a five-year strategy in 1999;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately review, revise and implement an updated, research-informed, comprehensive strategy to respond to and prepare for the rapidly growing needs of those living with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Arlyne.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is entitled "Population-based legal services funding." I know this is a good petition, because I helped them draft it.

It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

"Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

"Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds ... and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner."

I am pleased to sign and support this and send it down with page Hannah.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'll make this very quick.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I approve of this petition and will sign it and give it to page Riley.

1550

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I support this petition, affix my signature and will send it with page Natalie.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I couldn't agree more with this petition, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to sign and it hand it over to page Victoria.

HOSPICE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

"Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

"Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

"Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care."

I agree with the petition and will sign it.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for the governance and management of forestry;

“Whereas Resolute Forest Products holds 44% of the sustainable forest licence (SFL) in the Abitibi forest;

“Whereas Resolute Forest Products have announced their intent to give up their wood rights;

“Whereas the sustainable forest licence (SFL) is a critical element in the marketability for economic development in the town of Iroquois Falls to potential business interests;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Appeal to the Ministry of Natural Resources to institute a moratorium on the transfer of the SFL for the wood rights being abandoned by Resolute Forest Products in the Abitibi River forest for a period of 90 days to ensure that new entrants into the marketplace are able to apply for the SFL.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and send it to the table with Arlyne.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across” this province.

I agree with this petition and sign my name to it and give it to Amber to deliver.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions in support of improved winter road maintenance. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario’s highways are safe for travellers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I support this petition and have signed it.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas over 2,400 students and 450 Everest College “staff are impacted by the 14” Everest College “closures across Ontario, putting a financial strain on students, employees and their families; and

“Whereas students have the right to finish their programs, avoid unnecessary delays with graduation dates and not incur further financial costs of having to apply to another accredited institution to complete their program; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has been aware of the financial and legal difficulties facing Everest College and the US parent Corinthian Colleges for months; and

“Whereas students cannot afford to put their life on hold while the government struggles to sort out the mess involving another private college;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To act in a prompt manner and protect the interest of Everest students by providing an extension for paying back OSAP loans, ensuring a full refund is provided and” ensuring “that students can complete their program without delay at another accredited institution.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Arlyne to take to the table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I support this petition. I am putting my signature to it and will pass it on to page Julie.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario Parks offers discounts for Ontario persons with disabilities if they are ‘Ontario residents who have a CNIB identity card. Ontario residents who have a Ministry of Transportation accessible parking permit.’ But not all Ontario persons with disabilities have either of these;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To ensure that reduced camping fees at Ontario parks for persons with disabilities are available to all individuals with disabilities and not just those that acquire a CNIB identity card and/or have an accessible parking permit from the Ministry of Transportation.”

I agree with this, sign my name to this petition and give it to page Ali.

1600

OPPOSITION DAY

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize the findings in the February 2015 report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario that the actions of Pat Sorbara, the Premier’s deputy chief of staff, and Gerry Lougheed Jr., the chair of the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board, in relation to

former Liberal candidate Andrew Olivier, constitute an apparent breach of the bribery provisions of the Election Act;

Recognize that the actions of the Premier and her political operatives have led to two separate OPP investigations;

Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the said actions of the Premier, her deputy chief of staff and Gerry Lougheed Jr. have breached the standards of integrity and accountability that are required and expected of the Office of the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number one. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Democracy has been tarnished and the integrity of the Office of the Premier has been thrown away for political gain. Every cynical impression of how politics is practised in Ontario has been given validity, and a dark shadow has been cast over all politicians in this place. All this because the Premier refuses to even pretend any longer that she aspires to transparency and accountability.

I didn’t expect to have to introduce this motion. I thought the Premier truly wanted to be better than her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, who never hesitated to put the interests of the Liberal Party above the interests of integrity, honour, and respect for the people of Ontario. I was wrong, and that saddens me.

The Premier’s refusal to follow precedent and rise above suspicion and give Ontario residents even a modicum of faith in their government is tragic. It diminishes all of us, specifically when the Premier and her Deputy Premier suggest that this is just the way politics works in Ontario. They suggest it’s business as usual. Well, it isn’t. It may work like that in a Third World banana republic, but we’re better than that and we should be better than that.

Today I’m appealing to the backbench of the government caucus. Rise above the stubborn protection of Liberal operatives that the Premier is maintaining for questionable motives, throw away your talking points and look your constituents in the eyes without embarrassment. You know in your hearts that is what you want to do, so be courageous. The motion I have introduced on behalf of our caucus today for debate is based on the spirit of what is ethically accepted in our province and in our country.

When I served on the government benches, I didn’t need time to absorb a report in order to decide if I should temporarily step down as Minister of Health until the outcome of an investigation involving a member of my staff was completed. Action was swift and immediate. That’s because our government understood and respected the responsibility invested in us as legislators.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has failed to hold herself to the high standard expected from the Premier’s office. If charges are laid through either of the two Sudbury by-election OPP investigations—the one under the Election Act and the one under the Criminal Code—if charges are

laid, we expect her to step aside until the matter is fully resolved.

If a conviction is made and it is found or alleged that the Premier directed Ms. Sorbara or Mr. Lougheed to have those conversations with Mr. Olivier, then we'll be calling on her to resign.

Today, all we ask is the simple recognition that the Premier's office must be above suspicion, and a commitment that we preserve the integrity of Ontario's highest political office.

It astounds me, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier refuses to distance herself from bombshell allegations and OPP investigations into two of her prominent confidants. I say to the members opposite, is the \$100,000 that Gerry Lougheed raised for the Liberal Party the cost of buying your integrity? Is Pat Sorbara's loyalty in doing whatever it takes—even breaching provincial bribery laws, as alleged by the Chief Electoral Officer—worth trading your reputation for a tainted political win?

I know the Premier has repeatedly said that she had already decided to appoint Glenn Thibeault as her candidate and that any discussions were about Mr. Olivier's future in the party. The tape recordings we have heard clearly contradict that. I know the Premier's office has said that the recordings actually exonerate deputy chief of staff Pat Sorbara. I'm not sure what recordings the Premier's office listened to, but it certainly wasn't the ones that we have heard.

I don't know whether these two Liberal operatives were acting independently or on the instructions of the Premier when they told Andrew Olivier he could have a job or appointment if he stepped aside as the potential candidate. I do know that the Premier has a duty to be transparent and accountable. The damage has been done, but she can at least start trying to make amends by removing these individuals from the public positions they hold today.

It defies reason as to why the Premier would not ask these two individuals to stand aside. Today we're asking again for her to take the honourable and right action in the face of overwhelming evidence of wrongdoing, and we are asking the members of the Liberal caucus to side with integrity and respect by supporting our motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my great pleasure to rise and make some remarks on the opposition day motion brought forward by the Progressive Conservatives, but I first want to introduce some folks who are here in the gallery from the Youth Bridge Foundation. We have the Honourable Seth Kwame Acheampong, who is a member of Parliament in Ghana's Parliament and a patron of the Youth Bridge Foundation; Seth Oteng, who is the executive director of the Youth Bridge Foundation; Julio de Medeiros, who is a lawyer and director of the Youth Bridge Foundation; and a constituent of mine, Leo Johnson, who is the executive director of Empowerment Squared, a fantastic organization in Hamilton. Welcome, all. It's our honour to have you here.

Speaker, I want to first of all say that it's a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion, but it really gives me no pleasure whatsoever. It gives me no pleasure to once again in this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We listened intently to your leader when he was speaking; I would appreciate if you would do the same courtesy to the leader of the third party. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. It gives me no pleasure to once again in this Legislature be speaking about this Liberal government's scandals. It seems that's all we have to talk about around here, because they can never stop with the scandals.

We're all public servants. We are elected to represent the people of our ridings and the people of Ontario. We're expected to represent them with dignity and with integrity. All of us in this place have a responsibility to live up to not just the letter of the laws—the laws that we, in fact, enact in this chamber—but the spirit of the law, as well. In this case, however, as we all know, this Liberal government has lived up to neither.

The Premier now has the dubious distinction of having doubled the number of police investigations into her government from two to four, and she has the dubious distinction of it being the first time that the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever—ever—“conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery...”

Now, that's a quote from the Chief Electoral Officer's report. That's not the kind of history-making that anyone should be proud of. Four OPP investigations: That's a staggering number, but it's a number that represents something extremely telling. It represents a government that believes that the rules simply do not apply to them. That's what that number represents.

So what is it that brings us here today? We are here because, of course, once again a law has been broken by the Liberals. We are here because the Premier decided to appoint a candidate in a by-election. She had to bigfoot the local Sudbury democratic process, and now everybody is paying the price. How do the Liberals in Sudbury feel about this behaviour? The entire Liberal riding association up and quit. They resigned in protest. Not just one member, not just a few members of that riding association, but the entire riding association, en masse, resigned.

1610

Now here we are with yet another Liberal scandal. We're here because the government was so desperate to win that Sudbury by-election, at any cost, that they were willing to break the law. The Premier, of course, denies any wrongdoing. She denies that Mr. Lougheed or Ms. Sorbara did anything wrong. She says that it doesn't matter, that she did nothing wrong whatsoever and that she had made up her mind that she was going to appoint Mr. Thibeault well before the previous candidate, Mr. Olivier, was being enticed to step aside.

But nobody else knew this. Gerry Lougheed didn't seem to know when he said, “She's in favour of a

nomination race.” That was on December 11. Pat Sorbara didn’t seem to know when she said that the Premier is “gonna have to make a decision around the appointment.” That was on December 12.

The riding association didn’t know. The riding association resigned to a person in protest, let’s not forget. The president of the riding association described the week following the appointment as “a difficult week.”

Now, these don’t sound like people who knew that there was an appointment, that it was already a done deal. It certainly doesn’t sound that way to me. The Premier has one version of the story, but none of the evidence supports her version of the story. The Premier’s big problem here is that the people of Ontario have ears, they’re smart and they can listen for themselves. If they did that, they would hear this: “The Premier [and Pat Sorbara] wants to talk to you. They would like to present you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever....” They would hear Ms. Sorbara engaging in what Mr. Olivier referred to as a “negotiation about positions.”

An aside: What I think is interesting, and more than a little telling, is that in 45 minutes of conversation about the by-election in Sudbury that is on tape, not once, not one single time, does anybody talk about what’s good for Sudbury. They talk about what’s good for the Liberal Party, they talk about what’s good for the Premier, but not once do any one of these high-ranking Liberal operatives ever talk about what’s good for the people of Sudbury. I think that’s very telling.

But back to the tapes. I’ve listened to the tapes and I’ve heard what the OPP and the Chief Electoral Officer said and what they heard. Here’s what they heard:

Detective-Constable Erin Thomas of the OPP anti-racket squad said, “I do believe that Gerry Lougheed and Patricia Sorbara both engaged in soliciting and negotiating with Andrew Olivier in their respective conversations.... I believe the words spoken by both Lougheed and Sorbara to Olivier assists me in my belief the Criminal Code offence has been committed.”

Chief Electoral Officer Greg Essensa says this: “I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to ... contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act.” What does that act say? I’m going to tell you what it says. Subsection 96.1(e) says this: “No person shall, directly or indirectly ... give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office or employment to induce a person to become a candidate, refrain from becoming a candidate or withdraw his or her candidacy.”

Now, that’s pretty clear. It sounds a lot like “appointments, jobs, whatever.” But what does the Premier’s deputy chief of staff say in response to these allegations? She simply says, “I’m staying.” The arrogance that this displays to the people of Ontario is nothing short of astounding. To be under not one, but two, investigations and to believe that Ms. Sorbara’s presence is not damaging the institution she is supposed to serve is just plain disrespectful to Ontarians.

But perhaps what is most concerning is that both of these individuals, Ms. Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed, came

to Mr. Olivier on behalf of the Premier. While she denies it, and we may never know the truth, it looks pretty bad on this Premier that these two people are currently under investigation by the OPP anti-racket squad. Both claim to be acting on her wishes. It looks bad. It’s unbecoming of the office of Premier, and it is unbecoming of this entire Legislature.

The Premier has said dozens of times that this investigation is happening outside of this House. But she has kept it in this House herself. She has kept it right here in this Legislature by refusing to ask Ms. Sorbara to step aside. A verdict on this matter will come, and I’m curious as to why the Premier would rather risk the debacle of the OPP removing Ms. Sorbara from her office at the Legislature. That would be quite a horrifying thing to watch, but that’s what this Premier is prepared to risk by not doing the right thing and having her step aside during the process of this investigation.

The Ontario Civilian Police Commission is now investigating Mr. Lougheed, as everybody is aware. Mr. Lougheed serves as the chair of Sudbury’s police services board, and it is understandably troubling to the people of Sudbury that the chair of their police services board is under police investigation for a crime. The government has consistently tried to muddy the waters around Mr. Lougheed, claiming that they cannot remove him. But that’s not true. Again, Liberals caught in an untruth. Go figure, Speaker.

He was appointed with an order in council and he can be removed by an order in council. There is a lot of precedent for this, Speaker. Just recently, the Premier removed Paul Godfrey from the OLG by an order in council. There is also an enormous amount of precedent for having people step down while they’re under investigation: David Caplan, Greg Sorbara, Bob Runciman, the current acting leader of the opposition, as he mentioned in his own remarks just a few moments ago, and many, many more. Why? Because it was the right thing to do. All of these people stepped aside in order to protect the integrity of this House. It’s something that seems beyond the understanding of our Premier.

Ms. Sorbara must be asked to step down. Should she refuse, the Premier should remove her. Mr. Lougheed must step down. Should he refuse, the Premier must remove him. It’s about principle. This is about respect for the Legislature and respect for the people of Ontario. These people are under police investigation and they should not be serving in their current roles of the public trust while these investigations are happening.

The Liberals have consistently put their party over this province, at enormous cost to the people of Ontario: financial costs, as we’re all so sadly aware of, and now the cost of the very integrity of this Legislature. The OPP warrant says that “reference to the Premier’s authority threatens the appearance of the government’s integrity.” That’s from the OPP warrant. I would say that New Democrats wholeheartedly agree, and that’s why we are wholeheartedly going to be supporting this motion today.

I’m going to end my remarks by once again asking the Liberal government to have one modicum of decency and

integrity and do the right thing in terms of this particular situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Before I get started, I'd like to welcome MP Michael Chong from Wellington-Halton Hills. But before I introduce Michael, I want to congratulate him on this last week's third reading passage of the Reform Act, so congratulations, Michael. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to a motion that is so important and yet would be so unnecessary if only this Liberal government didn't thumb its nose at public accountability, didn't sneer and jeer at the prospect of having to fess up and answer questions that people across the province have been asking since first hearing the audiotapes that clearly record job offers in exchange for political favour. The audio is crystal clear and transcribed in black and white. We hear Gerry Lougheed Jr. say to Andrew Olivier, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier," before discussing "options in terms of appointments, jobs."

The Premier's deputy chief of staff seals the deal in declaring, "You've now been directly asked by the leader and the Premier," and then in the next breath clearly offering the spurned Andrew Olivier a taxpayer-funded job, "whether it's a full-time job or a part-time job at a constituency office, whether it's appointments" or "commissions."

1620

And yet the charade continues and it demands that we in opposition use every tool in our chest to demand answers, to demand accountability—essentially to demand responsibility from a government that has turned its back on the very concept of responsible government that our country and our provinces were built upon.

We've seen it in the handling of the gas plants to secure a handful of seats, in the refusal to allow testimony from Liberal staff and friends that were paid to delete emails to cover their gas plant trail; and we see it today—and every day since the resumption of question period—in the refusal to answer questions, in the red herring finger-pointing, and in the complete affront to accountability that this government arrogantly sticks to as the questions mount on investigations and apparent bribery breaches due to job offers to a loyal candidate they simply had lost any use for.

What happened to the Kathleen Wynne we heard preach new focused dedication to transparency? Where is that dedication now? Where is that promised transparency? We thought—the people of Ontario thought—that things would be different with a new Liberal leader pledging new directions and new commitments to accountability. She told us that things would be different, yet we continue to fall further down that same unaccountable rabbit hole of diversion and debt that Mr. McGuinty dropped us into before hightailing it as his house of cards began to crumble.

Quite frankly, the people of Ontario expect more from their elected representatives. They put their trust in gov-

ernment and they expect those they vote for who make decisions that impact their daily lives to act with honour and dignity, to be accountable and to be responsible.

Accountability and responsibility—two words that have provided the guiding principles for modern democracies and specifically our Canadian and provincial democracies since the adoption of responsible government in Upper Canada back in 1850. All members of this Legislature should be familiar with the concept of responsible government. We pass by a plaque commemorating the dedication and work of Robert Baldwin to responsible government every day. Mr. Baldwin would be turning over in his grave on a daily basis if he saw what the current government has done to the principles he held so dear.

You see, responsible government, as championed by Mr. Baldwin, whose legacy surrounds us today, is government that acts with the consent of the representatives of the people. It's because of the work of people like Robert Baldwin that we no longer have government answerable only to the authorities in Great Britain. According to the concept of responsible government, government is to be responsible to the elected representatives of the people. And yet today, some 165 years after Baldwin's work to instill these concepts, we see a government that works to oppose these cornerstones of democracy at every turn.

In the responsible government that Baldwin worked with and handed down to guide future generations, it was understood that a government official or a minister responsible to the elected representatives of the people should act, step aside or resign if their accountability was called into question. Baldwin himself took the honourable step side on numerous occasions to ensure his government's accountability was not tarnished. That's what responsible governments do when under investigation—when under a record four investigations—they act to ensure their accountability is above reproach.

The funny thing is that while the Premier told us she was moving away from the McGuinty trail of scandal and towards embracing accountability, the truth is that things may have actually gotten worse. At least McGuinty governments knew how to make their officials step aside when their accountability was called into question.

There was David Caplan, former health minister, finally opting to step aside at the centre of the eHealth and OLG storms. Then there was Greg Sorbara choosing to step aside in 2005 following the fact that he was the target of a long-running criminal investigation into a company he was a board member of. Both were McGuinty ministers and yet both understood the need to remove themselves as accountability questions mounted. On our side of the aisle, of course, we have our current and our one-time interim leaders, Jim Wilson and now-Senator Bob Runciman, who knew what to do when accountability was demanded.

And yet, these same concepts of accountability and responsibility now seem foreign to this government. Instead of doing the right thing and having her deputy

chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, removed from office following the Elections Ontario finding of an apparent breach of the bribery provisions of the Election Act, we see this Premier go in front of cameras to completely duck accountability and attempt to divert attention with a fantastical story pointing fingers of blame and smear at the entire PC caucus without producing one shred of evidence. Hardly accountable, Speaker, and definitely not responsible.

Not satisfied to stop there, she took it a step further, telling media and investigators alike, as to the possibility of charges against Pat Sorbara, "On our review of the matter we don't expect that to happen." I again question why an elected representative—why a Premier—is commenting on her expectations of the outcome of an ongoing investigation into her own staff.

Again, with regard to today's important motion, I fully concur that "the Premier, her deputy chief of staff and Gerry Lougheed, Jr. have breached the standards of integrity and accountability that are required and expected of the office of the Premier." We hoped for better, we expected better and the people of Ontario deserve better from a government that has turned its back on the pillars of responsible government that our system is built upon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm also very proud to join the debate. This is a matter of great importance to us, to the constituents in my riding and, in fact, to all Ontarians.

The issue is that we've seen what is going on in terms of the trend in Ontario and, in fact, the trend across this country. But particularly in Ontario, we see increasing apathy, and there's a reason for that. There's a reason why there's increasing apathy. It's because people feel very cynical about politics. It is incumbent on us to change that tide, to reverse that tide. How can we do that? As politicians, we can hold ourselves to a higher standard. In fact, we should do so, because it's on us—it's our responsibility—to restore that faith and that trust in the political system.

The problem is this: Cynicism breeds more cynicism. As people are more cynical about politics and don't trust politicians, fewer people will come out to vote and it's more likely that those people responsible for that cynicism will get re-elected. It's no surprise that the Liberal government is largely responsible for this growing cynicism through scandal after scandal, through lack of taking responsibility for their actions and for the lack of accountability and transparency.

It's almost laughable that this Premier has indicated that this government is a new government; that they're going to turn a new leaf and be more accountable, they're going to be transparent. The reality is so far from that. Whether we look at the gas plant scandal and the way in which this government handled that scandal—which was the reason why this Premier said, "I'm going to stand up and change the course that this government and this party has been going on. We're going to change the course and instead we're going to be more accountable and trans-

parent." What they did they do? They shut down the committee. They prevented the key witnesses who were at the heart of the scandal, the witnesses who were responsible for the deletion—they prevented that key witness, Peter Faist, from ever testifying. When we asked to hear Laura Miller again in committee when we learned there was some connection between her and the person who actually wiped the computers with military grade software—we wanted that to come forward—this government created barrier after barrier and, in fact, ended up blocking that and didn't allow that truth to come forward.

It should really be of no surprise that now, with this scandal, the government is again showing its true colours: It's not a government that cares about transparency and accountability; in fact, this is a government that is fuelling that growing cynicism in our society and in Ontario.

I want to draw attention to what is going on in terms of the public appearance. I'm a criminal defence lawyer, and I absolutely believe in the presumption of innocence. I absolutely agree that until someone is tried in court, they can't be determined to be guilty or innocent. But there's also a very strong principle of the appearance of fairness. That's also a very powerful legal principle: Certain things have to have the appearance of fairness for the society in which those things are going on to have any trust in the administration of justice. Things have to look like they're fair as well as actually being fair.

One of the key areas where there doesn't seem to be a very good sense of fairness is that on the Police Services Board in Sudbury we have an individual, Gerry Lougheed Jr., who is currently the subject of a criminal investigation. He's sitting on the police services board of the very city in which this investigation is going on. Just as a layperson looking at that, that doesn't seem like a very fair idea. It doesn't seem to me that it is just that the person who is the subject of an investigation would be in charge of that entire police board. It just doesn't look fair. In fact, it's not fair. That's why the appropriate thing to do—subject to these investigations, Gerry Lougheed should step down. If he's not stepping down, the government should step forward and do the right thing.

1630

When it comes to the deputy chief of staff, these are serious allegations. I want to really draw attention to the fact that we have an independent officer—the Chief Electoral Officer—who independently reviewed the evidence in this matter.

Again, it's very clear, and the Premier has repeated this: No one is saying that the Chief Electoral Officer said someone is guilty or innocent. But what the Chief Electoral Officer did say is that, looking at the evidence, looking at the facts before him, there was an apparent contravention.

At one point, the Liberal Party members were kind of saying, "Oh, apparent, apparent. It doesn't seem like they're very serious." I just want to draw your attention to the legal definition of "apparent." "Apparent," when

used in the context of the Chief Electoral Officer's report, is obvious or glaring contravention.

I want to quote from the report because I think it's very important to mention that the Chief Electoral Officer said, "Although I do not have to weigh questions of credibility or balance competing facts as would a judge, my non-partisan role in overseeing the integrity of provincial elections means that I have to be satisfied that there is more than simply a 'fair probability' that there has been a contravention before concluding that any possible contravention has reached the threshold of being 'apparent.'"

What he's saying is that it has to be more than a fair probability. It has to be pretty significant for the Chief Electoral Officer to reach that threshold of an apparent contravention. That means it can't just be, "Oh, maybe there's a contravention" or "There might have been a contravention" or "There's a fair probability that there was." He had to be satisfied there was more than a fair probability that the evidence before him constituted an apparent contravention. That means that there is some serious evidence here that it's pretty obvious that there was some sort of contravention.

A judge will determine guilt or innocence, but the independent officer has made it very clear that looking at the evidence, it's pretty obvious that something went wrong here; it's pretty obvious that there is a mistake that was made.

Whether we find someone guilty or innocent is another question, but given that it's an obvious contravention, then the government needs to take the right action and say, "Listen, during this potential obvious contravention of an act, we can't have the deputy chief of staff continue to be the deputy chief of staff. People are going to lose faith in us."

Clearly, the government doesn't care to have anyone lose faith in them. People have already lost a lot of faith.

The issue is that, for the appearance of fairness, it's important that the government do the right thing, and it's simply unacceptable that they're allowing Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Pat Sorbara to continue on with their roles—despite all the evidence to the contrary.

What we're seeing in this government is a pattern of behaviour that is greatly troubling to us. It speaks very poorly in terms of accountability and transparency, and it really speaks poorly about the way this government is setting an example for the province.

The Premier of the province has a responsibility to act with the utmost fairness, the utmost integrity and the utmost principles, and it's incumbent upon this office for the Premier to act in that fashion. To act in that fashion means to take these allegations very seriously. We're not seeing, through the government's behaviour, through avoiding the answers, through avoiding responding to questions, through a seeming dismissal of the seriousness of this, that the government and the Premier are taking these allegations seriously. It doesn't speak well to the integrity of this office and to the seriousness and the importance to which all Ontarians look in terms of—the

Premier of this province should be held to a high standard, and the government is simply not following through with that standard.

If we look at the timeline—and this is something that we've drawn up and we've pointed out before—the timeline makes it very clear that there are some serious problems with the Premier's version of events. If we look at the timing of the phone calls—and the difference in this case is that in other cases you don't really know what went on. You have, perhaps, someone saying that something happened, but there's no real evidence of what actually went on. Andrew Olivier—and we know that—initially said, "Listen, there was some wrongdoing. There were some discussions that went on," and nothing happened, when he had just said that something happened.

But in this case, we have something very different than other cases and other scandals. We actually have real evidence. We have clear evidence of phone calls. We have clear conversations, and those conversations can't be deleted. They're out there now, on YouTube, so you can't delete them anymore. They're out there in the public domain, and it's very clear that what happened was that there were some conversations with Andrew Olivier. Those conversations clearly lay out that there was an inducement, that there was an attempt to induce Mr. Olivier not to be the candidate, not to run in the nomination. In fact, more than that, they wanted him to actually nominate Mr. Thibault.

So the evidence is very clear, and I'm very curious to see what's going to happen as this case unfolds. But we know for one thing that this has definitely set a clear precedent, that there are some clear violations, that this government has another scandal, that there's another OPP investigation. This is history. The government wants to set history, probably, in a positive way, but you've set some horrible history. This is the first time ever in the history of Ontario that the Chief Electoral Officer has investigated bribery and has specifically investigated the government and has made a finding of an apparent contravention—of a bribery-related offence. That's unbelievable.

Looking at the timeline of events, particularly with the recent information—we now have a letter that was released not until the writ was declared on January 7. Now we know that we have this smoking-gun evidence of the government's actions and the type of scandal-ridden decision-making and actions that they have taken. It is simply not acceptable. It's something that we should not see in this province. It is completely unacceptable that a government would act in this manner.

We absolutely support this motion. This is something that we need to see come forward. We need to have a government that's accountable.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was a pleasure to speak today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: The reason for this opposition day motion is in direct response to the Sudbury scandal.

However, it is also the opportunity to highlight the pattern of behaviour of this government. In the brief time I have to join this debate, I will attempt to establish those two objectives.

The key issue in the Sudbury case is the refusal of the Premier to accept ministerial responsibility in seeking the resignations of deputy chief of staff Sorbara and chair of the Sudbury police board Loughheed. The Premier has said that she will not ask anyone to step aside based on allegations, but said that of course Sorbara would step aside if charges were laid. By ignoring the calls for prominent Liberal fundraiser Gerry Loughheed to temporarily resign from the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board, the Premier is ignoring the Ontario Civilian Police Commission's expectation that board members have the highest levels of honesty and integrity and that this is most certainly true for board chairs.

This behaviour is in direct contradiction of parliamentary tradition. That tradition requires ministers of the crown to either resign or step aside during an investigation. We have many examples of people who have done that, two of whom include Minister Runciman and Minister Sorbara.

Instead, the Premier is hiding behind the veil of investigation. But let's be clear: This is after the event. The questions that she should answer are those which detail her actions and those of her hand-picked subordinates before the Chief Electoral Officer was asked to investigate.

1640

When there is an investigation, the Premier and her government feel insulated from the pain of accepting and atoning for her actions. If the government is being investigated, the Premier likes to embrace the safe ground of the investigation. She can then say, "I cannot comment. There's an investigation ongoing," or, "That is being dealt with by the process at hand." The government has actually incorporated their investigation by authorities into their game plan.

But there is a pattern of behaviour. It was clear back in 2007 with Mike Colle, who resigned when the Auditor General criticized the lack of spending control and transparency. Auditor Jim McCarter found that the government gave out \$32 million in year-end grants based on conversations and without any formal application procedure.

It was clear back in 2009, when Minister of Health David Caplan resigned after the Auditor General released a scathing report on eHealth Ontario spending.

Then there was the seat-saver decision to cancel two gas-fired power plant projects during an election—a politically expedient measure that cost Ontario taxpayers \$1.1 billion. Didn't the government know that cancelling the gas plants would cost billions? Didn't the government know it is their job to guard against wasting tax dollars? Didn't the government know that this was, in effect, buying votes before election day? Didn't the Liberals know that the final cost would be discovered in the end? Why did they make the decision in the first place?

There's more: the deletion of emails to try to cover up the cost of the gas plant cancellation seat-saver plan. Didn't the government and its staff know that deleting emails was wrong? Didn't the government know that their actions would be an affront to democracy?

Those rhetorical questions are meant to prove a point. This government has no moral compass to ethically guide its behaviour on behalf of Ontarians.

This opposition day motion is one of the few tools we have as Her Majesty's loyal opposition to expose the current government and its sordid pattern of self-preservation, at the cost of not just billions of taxpayer dollars but the cost of the loss of confidence of Ontarians.

People want to have confidence in their government. They want to have safe communities, good jobs and stable institutions. They want mutual respect between themselves and their political leaders.

This government has betrayed the people of this province with its never-ending scandals, poor judgment and ruthless partisanship. No matter how the Premier spins it, she cannot create good, open, transparent and accountable government unless she embodies it by her actions. Actions speak louder than words, especially words that no longer ring true.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today and provide a perspective that we haven't heard in the Legislature today.

Over the last few weeks on this side and indeed throughout the House, we've been listening to the opposition, during question period, speak about the same issue. In fact, they've asked the same question over 200 times. They've attacked people's credibility and integrity. They've made false assumptions and accusations. They have played investigator, lawyer and judge. The opposition may not like it, but this investigation is taking place independent of government and certainly independent of this Legislature.

I want to go back. Let's review what has happened here. In the 2014 general election, the NDP won the riding of Sudbury. Then, five months later—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: With all due respect, I listened very patiently and quietly to what you were saying. I would ask that you afford me the same things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's my job. You will continue without the cross-border interaction. Thank you.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your advice.

So, no more than five months later, the member who was elected resigned their job, and of course all three parties had to prepare for a by-election. Through a series of conversations, first among community members, we became aware that Glenn Thibeault was considering running for us. I don't have to explain to members of this House how significant that was. Here we had an experienced, progressive New Democratic Party member of

Parliament wanting to join our team. I think that's something that's good for Sudbury. As the Premier said, once she met Glenn, she was convinced that he was the right candidate for us, and I agree.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a pause at this point to tell you a little bit about Glenn Thibeault, so we can understand the quality of the candidate who was approaching us to run. Throughout his career, Glenn has shown an unwavering commitment to Greater Sudbury and to a better and fairer Sudbury. He has fought tirelessly for supports for persons with developmental disabilities and for quality services for families struggling with autism. As a director of the United Way, he led many successful—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Sit down. I think we're discussing the motion at hand, in regard to motion number 1. Giving the history of an individual member really isn't in accordance with what you should be responding to, so if you could cut back on that a little bit and get back to the motion, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I appreciate your advice again. What I'm trying to demonstrate is part of the history of what has gone on here and the decision that went into appointing the member from Sudbury, which I believe is germane to this, so I will try to keep it short.

But I also want to say that Glenn is a person who is focused on building opportunity for all the people of Sudbury. Whether he's advocating for retirement security, enhanced consumer protection measures or investments in the Ring of Fire, he has consistently put Sudbury's and residents' interests first, and I think that's a good thing for Sudbury. I wanted to be able to respond to that, Mr. Speaker. That's why the Premier decided to appoint him as our candidate. He won the election and is now representing us at Queen's Park, and is also the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

I understand why members of the third party are upset. A seat they won last June was long held by the party on this side of the House, and then five months later we had to have a by-election. A federal NDP MP decided to run, to join Kathleen Wynne's team and the Liberals, and then they're less one seat, which leaves them one less than they were at dissolution, when they did not support the budget last year.

In fairness, I just wanted to lay that out, as how we got to where we are. But where I do want to go is a bit farther back in history, because I think it's germane to the kinds of things that have been thrown back and forth here in the House and the kind of accusation that is made in the last paragraph of the motion.

I want to remind the members opposite that the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock resigned her seat and accepted a paid position on the same day in 2009. I'd like to read some headlines from that time:

"Scott Trades Seat For Head Office Job.

"Progressive Conservative Laurie Scott was given the job Friday of getting the opposition party ready for the

next election in exchange for giving up her seat in the Ontario Legislature."

"In exchange for giving up her seat ... Scott is taking on the 'enormous responsibility' of election readiness chairwoman for the party."

We have no idea what conversations happened or what the scenarios were there. We also have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we done?

1650

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we had another member, former MPP Floyd Laughren, who resigned his seat in 1998 to become chair of the Ontario Energy Board.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He got appointed months after.

Mr. John Fraser: Just stay with me for a bit, thank you very much. "Veteran MPP Floyd Laughren, the former New Democrat finance minister, is calling it quits to accept a \$120,000-a-year government appointment." That was in the Hamilton Spectator.

The energy minister at the time was the current leader of the official opposition. When he was asked to explain what the difference was between this kind of appointment and the accusations he is currently making, his answer was, "If you're looking for logic in this business, you're in the wrong place."

I'll give you one more example, and then I'll stop. The former PC member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, David Tilson, resigned his seat in 2002 for Ernie Eves. Shortly after, he was given a paid appointment by the PC Party as vice-chair of the Ontario Municipal Board. Some of the headlines were: "MPP Who Gave Up Seat ... Gets Plum Patronage Posting"; "David Tilson, the government member who vacated his post for Premier Ernie Eves, was named vice-chairman of the Ontario Municipal Board, which pays between \$74,000 and \$111,000" a year; "The Progressive Conservative politician who resigned his seat in the Legislature so Premier Ernie Eves could run for office was handed a 'plum' government appointment yesterday."

I just say that to lay some context.

You know, I have a great deal of respect for the leader of the official opposition. I did hear him speak about Justice Cunningham, and that appointments should be made in a fair and open manner. With all due respect, I can't find any record in Hansard, or anywhere, where that circumstance that occurred was of concern to him.

We've had some talk about nominations today, and I want us all to remember the NDP nomination in Scarborough-Guildwood. Now, I don't want to get into Bigfoot right now. I don't want to get into Bigfoot, but the NDP's decision to install Adam Giambrone—ask the members if that was a free and open process. Ask them if they thought it was a sham. Ask them if they thought it was Bigfoot. They went with the preferred candidate and blocked the previous candidate who had run for them unsuccessfully.

You know, we've been talking about the third party. The leader of the third party knows how to keep

candidates involved. She has hired their former member from Davenport and the former member from York South-Weston.

With all due respect to members of the House, what I am trying to say is that there's a deep—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There's a certain word I'm hearing a lot from over there—it starts with B—and I don't want to hear it again, or they will retract it.

Continue.

Mr. John Fraser: There's a deep contradiction or chasm between the accusations and aspersions they're throwing around and their own actions. That's the point I'm trying to make.

But I want to make one thing very clear in this; I didn't hear it come up in the debate today, and I just want to raise it so the members across will hear. Elections Ontario has determined that the allegations against the Premier and the member from Sudbury are baseless. They are baseless. The Chief Electoral Officer also said he was neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence; that those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.

We take this very seriously. We will continue to co-operate fully, as Elections Ontario's examination moves forward to the next phase. We take them very seriously, and we respect that these allegations are entirely independent of the government and this House. We respect the process and suggest that the opposition do the same. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Well, Speaker, thank you very much. I'm supporting the motion.

In a way, I feel terrible for the member from Ottawa South, who was sent out to be the foot soldier and the spokesperson today. I don't believe for a moment that he believes a single word that he uttered in this chamber on this motion today. When you sit there and you want to compare what has happened here in Sudbury—and he throws out the names of Floyd Laughren and Laurie Scott and David Tilson and Paul Ferreira. This is the typical Liberal spin. They will try to draw up something from the past that has no connection whatsoever to what is happening in the present and try to justify their actions based on their evaluation of what happened in the past. I can tell you this: When it comes to Floyd Laughren or Laurie Scott or David Tilson or Paul Ferreira or Jonah Schein, not one of them was subject to an OPP investigation. Not one of them was cited by the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario as being in apparent contravention of the law. So when I hear that kind of spin, it makes my blood boil. We're here in a serious, serious situation.

Speaker, I want to talk about the Premier for a second. It is not for me to say what standards you should conduct yourself by. I have to live up to my standards, but maybe it's time that Kathleen Wynne lived up to her standards.

We heard it ad infinitum during her leadership race. We've heard it repeated over and over again since she has become the leader and the Premier. We heard it in her throne speech, and we hear it over and over again. During her leadership speech, she said, "This is the time, right now, to show that we have learned from our mistakes and they will not happen again." These were the words of our Premier, Kathleen Wynne: that they learned from the mistakes of the past and they would not repeat them.

They had an opportunity in Sudbury to do it the right way. They failed. Now they're the subject of a criminal investigation. This party over there, the governing party, is the subject of four criminal investigations by the OPP. They're going to stand here and they're going to stonewall and they're going to do everything they can to try to deflect from what really happened here. What really happened here is a breach of the public trust.

The people of Ontario expect better. They are not holding you to their standards. They're holding you to the standards you set yourself, Premier. You set the standards. You must live up to the standards that you set for yourself. This is why we brought this motion. This is why our leader, Jim Wilson, has brought this motion: to bring some semblance of accountability and integrity and ethics back to this House.

What has happened in Sudbury is absolutely wrong, and at the end of the day I believe it will be proven wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll start off by saying what our leader, Andrea Horwath, said, which is that this is not a debate that, quite frankly, we're all really happy to be in. This is a rather sad situation. You would hope that in this Legislature there would be a higher standard when it comes to how we deal with things when things go wrong. Unfortunately, in this particular case the Premier, for whatever reason, has decided to stonewall. As a result, we, as the opposition, have been asking questions.

I heard the member across the way say that we have come into this House and we have asked questions 200 times. You know what? There'll be 201, there'll be 202, there'll be 203, because not only we in the opposition, but the people, have the right to understand what the Premier did—and for her to take responsibility for her actions.

At the end of the day, this reflects on the Premier and her integrity when it comes to what she has done. Let's be clear here—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Sore losers.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And there we go: The government across the way is saying this is about sore losers. The people of Sudbury voted for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears that the Minister of Transportation, the minister without portfolio and the member from Timmins-James are having cross—you go through me, okay? I don't want

pointing and yelling at each other. You go through the Chair.

Continue.

1700

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, Speaker, through you, the people of Sudbury decided to vote for Mr. Thibeault by majority. We respect that. I think all members of this assembly respect that. That is not the issue here. The issue is not Mr. Thibeault. The issue is what the Premier did, and that's what we've been raising in this House all the way along. Our candidate and our leader on the night of the election congratulated Mr. Thibeault. We've never had a fight with him in regard to—we fought him in the campaign, but we never had a fight with the results, because in a democracy the people decide.

The problem here is, the Premier doesn't recognize that what her people did was to break the law. There are two laws in question here, the first one being the election law. The election law is quite clear. Once we know that a person wants to be considered as a candidate, you are not able to bribe in any kind of way that person to run or not to run for office. Doing so is a violation of the Election Act. What happened in this case was, people from the Premier's office or people from the party called Mr. Olivier to offer a job, a Pandora of jobs, in order to not run and, instead, nominate Mr. Thibeault. Because what they wanted was that if they were able to get Mr. Olivier to move the nomination, they would have been able to show that the party was unified in their attempt to elect that candidate.

Unfortunately, what happened was that the government decided to offer jobs to Mr. Olivier not to run, and Mr. Olivier said, "This is wrong. I'm not going to do it. I'm going to run as a candidate," and then he recorded the conversations of both Mr. Loughheed and Madam Sorbara. The question here is, who asked those two individuals to make the phone call? That's what is at issue here.

The Premier and members on the government side say, "Well, this has nothing to do with that because all of you guys have done the same thing." Phooey. The Election Act was never broken by either the Conservatives or New Democrats in this type of situation because we have nomination processes. We are not allowed to appoint candidates. In our party, and I believe in the Conservatives as well, there is a nomination process by which anybody who wants—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm fine, Speaker. Let them yell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. Last warning to the Minister of Transportation. First warning to the minister without portfolio.

And don't tell me what to tell them to do. Carry on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, there's a nomination process, that anybody who wants to stand for office has to go through a nomination process. They talk about Mr. Giambrone. Of course it was a sticky nomination. The membership list there was

phoned by Mr. Giambrone. He found the majority of votes in that riding, to the consternation of some who were on the executive, and there were some people who were unhappy at the result of the vote at the nomination meeting. But there was a vote at the nomination meeting by the members in that riding association and they nominated Mr. Giambrone.

So you can try to spin this any way you can, because what the Liberals are attempting to do, Mr. Speaker, through you, is to throw as much mud as they can against the wall and say, "Look, all those politicians are the same." We are not the same. We have not broken the law. You broke the law. So don't try to throw mud against the wall and say that somehow we are the same.

The other stupidity that they've put on the floor is that there are members in this House who negotiated jobs in order to lose their own elections. How stupid can you be? People stand for office. Some people don't get re-elected—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the transportation minister.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know that relative to the member who's speaking right now, I'm a bit of a rookie here, but I don't think that member can use that kind of language to cast those aspersions on honourable members on this side of the House—words that I won't repeat because they're unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your input, but I don't think he singled out any individual; it was the group. I can't really single out anyone because it was a group thing.

Continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Mr. Speaker, there is a democratic process in this province, as across this country, that people stand for office. Some people lose their election—surprise, surprise. And guess what? They're looking for a job after the election, so that a government or somebody hiring them is hardly a breaking of the law. It's what you call basic economics. Somebody's got to make a paycheque to pay the bills, and if you lost your election, you have the right to look for another job. And the government is saying somehow or other that's a breaking of the law and that's immorality on the part of the opposition? Give me a break.

What happened here was, the government decided they were not going to have a nomination meeting because Monsieur Olivier, who had run in the previous election, had a majority of that riding association inside, and if there was going to be a nomination, I have to think—I don't know for sure; only the Liberals can answer this question—they probably feared that Mr. Olivier had a majority of the vote in that riding association and they decided that they didn't want him as a candidate, they wanted somebody else.

So rather than follow the process of the nomination, they had Mr. Loughheed, then they had Mrs. Sorbara and eventually the Premier make the phone call—of which we don't have the recording—and the offers were made for him not to run in exchange for appointments or jobs.

If you listen to those tapes, it is pretty darn clear. What is very unfortunate in this whole debate is that you've got the Premier trying to throw mud on the wall, to try to say all politicians are the same, when we are not the same. We have processes in our party, the New Democratic Party, that ensure that elections are transparent and you don't have this monkeying around. So it's virtually impossible for our party process to allow somebody to be bribed, because it is clearly a nominating process in which only those in the riding association who are members are able to vote.

But now the Premier doesn't want to take her responsibility. The Leader of the Opposition said in his opening comments—and it was repeated by my leader—that there is ample example in this House where members of the House in cabinet, and sometimes as parliamentary assistants, have made errors. They've either released names that they shouldn't have released, that were subject to privacy laws, or did something that might have been wrong, and in order to be able to make sure that there's some accountability, those people stood down. I watched Evelyn Gigantes, a Minister of Health under the government I served in, resign because in a question she responded to the opposition, by error she read a name out of her briefing book that was the name of a patient. She resigned that afternoon.

I looked at Mr. Wilson do pretty well the same thing in the Legislature as the result of a privacy concern when he was Minister of Health and he resigned. Why? Because there is ministerial responsibility as a basic doctrine about how this place works. And if ministers and Premiers are not going to take responsibility for what happens under their watch and for the people who work for them, we're in trouble.

The Premier has a responsibility to make sure the right thing is done. What she should have done at the beginning, if her version of the story is true—and I've got to tell her, her version has a whole bunch of holes in it. If she's not the one who ordered these people in and she knew nothing about it, she should have fired Sorbara and asked her to stand aside until the investigation was over, and she should have asked Mr. Lougheed to stand side. Why is it that she didn't do that? You can draw your own conclusion.

We're going to vote with the opposition on this motion because the reality here is that the government and the Premier specifically are not taking their responsibility and should do the right thing.

This goes to the very core of what it is that this Premier says she is all about. Premier Wynne says, "I'm a person of integrity. I always want to do the right thing." Well, if you're a person of integrity and you want to do the right thing, ask these people to stand aside as this investigation is going through. That's the right thing to do. And every day that the Premier comes into this House and refuses to answer the questions and refuses to do the right thing by asking people to stand aside, it attacks her basic credibility. If she can't get her version of the story straight with all of the facts, how do we know that on other issues it is not going to be the same?

I think the Premier is in damage control here. If she wants to have the confidence of the people, let alone of the opposition, I think the people have to see her as doing the right thing. It's a simple thing to do. Members of the Tory caucus and members of the NDP caucus—and I would argue of the government caucus—have seen ministers stand aside and have asked staff to leave when the wrong thing was done, because in the end, you have a responsibility to make sure that you keep the integrity of the office and you do the right thing.

If the Premier continues to go down this direction, I believe more and more people will start to see that Kathleen Wynne may put herself out to be a progressive, she may put herself out to be the person she wants to be seen as, but at the end of the day I think we're going to start recognizing that Kathleen Wynne is no different than Dalton McGuinty and others who came before her, who always did what was right for the Liberal Party and did not do what was right for the people of Ontario.

1710

Yes, we understand that in politics campaigns are tough, and yes, we put our elbows up when we're campaigning during elections and by-elections, but at the end of the day, we must maintain the integrity of the system. In this particular case, the government broke the law. The Chief Electoral Officer was pretty clear about it. The OPP investigation is clear about it. The tapes are clear about it. The facts are pretty well straight.

I say to the government across the way that they should do the right thing, and they should maintain the tradition that has been in this House for so many years, so that when something goes wrong, there's some ministerial responsibility. Either you ask your staff to step aside, if they're the ones who did the error, or, if you're ultimately responsible, you stand aside until an investigation is over and you've had an opportunity to be able to clear the air.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much—
Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —and yes, it will be good, Minister.

Speaker, it's with great regret that I must speak to this motion today. Had the Premier shown even a shred of integrity or desire to elevate the office which she holds, we wouldn't be here discussing this today. But we are, because the Premier traded integrity for a tainted political win in Sudbury, and now she refuses to take responsibility.

This much is clear: According to the Chief Electoral Officer, the Liberals have broken the law. A leader with integrity would have taken action. The Premier should have demanded the resignation of her deputy chief of staff and the chair of the Sudbury police services board for their conduct. If charges are laid against either Sorbara or Lougheed under the OPP investigation, we expect the Premier to do the honourable thing and step aside until the charges are resolved. And if Sorbara or

Lougheed is convicted of any charges that are laid, Kathleen Wynne must take the responsibility as Premier and resign.

The Premier can continue to issue news releases and deny that the party she leads tried to bribe a potential candidate from running for office, but the report from Elections Ontario says otherwise. She may be talking, but she's not answering. She's not answering any of the questions Ontarians need the answers to. Goodness knows we've asked her enough times in the Legislature; I think the member from the Liberal Party who spoke said it was 200 times. He's probably right. Yet 200 questions; zero answers. Her version of the story just does not add up.

In fact, we now know from the OPP—much like the gas plants scandal, we now know the facts. Quite frankly, the Premier's version contradicts the facts. Again, just like in the gas plants scandal, in the face of hollow promises of accountability and transparency, the Premier is putting the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of doing what is right. It's what she does. It's been her MO.

Just like the gas plants scandal, you've got the deputy chief of staff of the Premier's office under OPP scrutiny. Just like the gas plant scandal, you've got senior Liberal operatives under the scrutiny of the OPP. Speaker, when does this end? When is this going to end for the people of Ontario?

To be clear, let's focus on the key contradictions here. The Premier has stated that she made the decision to appoint Glenn Thibeault by the end of November. She stated this on the record multiple times. Yet here's her number two staffer, the deputy chief of staff, on tape clearly indicating the opposite. On December 12, Pat Sorbara said, "She's"—meaning the Premier—"gonna"—future tense, and that's important. "She's gonna have to make a decision around the appointment." On December 12, according to the Premier's deputy chief of staff and campaign manager, the decision wasn't made. So if she says on tape that the decision wasn't made, the decision wasn't made. That contradicts exactly what the Premier's timeline has been stating.

It's also clear that Andrew Olivier was being offered a range of taxpayer-paid jobs to drop out of the nomination. Again, I'll quote Pat Sorbara: "Whether it's a full-time or a part-time job in a constit office, whether it's appointments to boards or commissions." And Gerry Lougheed said, "The Premier wants to talk to you. They would like to present to you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever, that you and her and Pat Sorbara could talk about."

Lougheed is also clear on December 11 that nothing has been decided. Again, this contradicts what the Premier has said on numerous occasions. Let me quote what's on the tape from him. "You need to say, 'So, why would Andrew Olivier be motivated to do this?'" It gets down to: "Otherwise, guess what, I'm gonna go sell memberships and see what my chances are." So the option on December 11 is still, "You may go and sell memberships," which means there was no decision made. The option to sell memberships is still there, and, again, that contradicts what the Premier has stated time after time.

The Chief Electoral Officer is clear. He wrote: "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act." That reads, "No person shall, directly or indirectly ... give, procure, promise or agree to procure an office or employment to induce a person to become a candidate, refrain from becoming a candidate or withdraw..." On page 8 of the Chief Electoral Officer's report he writes, "I have to be satisfied that there is more than simply a 'fair probability' that there has been a contravention before concluding that any possible contravention has reached the threshold of being 'apparent.'"

Speaker, there's no question that the standards of integrity and accountability of the Premier's office have been breached. I support this motion of our leader Jim Wilson and call on the Premier to follow some advice from her predecessor, who once famously quipped: "It's never too late to do the right thing."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was going to say that I'm pleased to rise in this House, as I'm always pleased to rise in this House, but this is a sad day for Ontario—a sad day.

I want to read the last section of our leader's opposition day motion. What it says is, "Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the said actions of the Premier, her deputy chief of staff and Gerry Lougheed Jr. have breached the standards of integrity and accountability that are required and expected of the Office of the Premier." How sad it is that we're here today doing this.

I know that all of us, when we stood to run for office—all members of this Legislature had certain values that we were brought up with and that we believe that we have. We came here to do a job for our constituents with honour and integrity and to honestly do the best job we could.

1720

My constituents have called me on this issue for the last couple of weeks: "What is going on down there?" This government is prone to OPP investigations. They can't seem to get away from them. This is unprecedented in Ontario's history.

There are a couple of things I'd like to read to you. This is from Mr. Essensa. It says, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act as reflected in my attached report. Consequently I have reported this matter the Attorney General of Ontario in accordance with section 4.0.2 of the Election Act."

Subsection 96.1(e) of this act says, "No person shall, directly or indirectly ... (e) give, procure or promise or agree to procure an office or employment to induce a person to become a candidate, refrain from becoming a candidate or withdraw his or her candidacy."

I know we've heard different quotes from the tapes that were recorded by Mr. Olivier. Here's part of it from Mr. Lougheed, when he was talking to Mr. Olivier. He said, "So I come to you on behalf of the Premier and on behalf of, I guess, Thibault more indirectly, to ask you if you would consider stepping down—more than that Andrew, nominating him. In the course of that deliberation the Premier wants to talk to you. They would like to present to you options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever, that you and her and Pat Sorbara can talk about."

How more blatant can it be that this government and members of the Premier's office were involved in this scandal? It's certainly no wonder that the OPP are involved in this now and Mr. Essensa had no alternative but to turn it over to the OPP. Ms. Sorbara states, "If there were other things that you're particularly interested in that is within her realm"—meaning the Premier—"to make you part of, then she is more than prepared to do that." Again, a damning statement from those tapes.

I also want to make you aware that it is unnecessary to show that a particular job was offered. The Premier keeps saying this, that there was no particular job offered. "In this regard," it also goes on to say that "an apparent contravention could be established if a candidate is offered a range of options rather than a specific role in a specific office."

I think—I know—that the people of Ontario demand more of the Legislature. They demand more of their elected representatives than to be going through repeated OPP investigations that this current government seems to be addicted to.

When I first came here back in 2011, we had Ornge. Then, we had the gas plants scandal. Now we have got two investigations going on with this Sudbury election. This is truly sad for this province. It's truly sad for this House. This has to end.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll be very limited in what I have to say. I have certain biblical quotations that I like to go to in situations such as this.

John 8:7—I'll paraphrase: "Let he or she who is without sin cast the first stone."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate? Second call for further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can give you a few other biblical passages, Jim.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can do a few biblical ones myself.

Third call: Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a 10-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1725 to 1735.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Mr. Wilson has moved opposition day number 1. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	MacLaren, Jack	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Vanhof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Hoggarth, Ann	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoskins, Eric	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hunter, Mitzie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Jaczeck, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwala, Sophie	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kwintar, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Thibault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 52.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The motion is lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The business designated for this afternoon having been completed, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1739.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

By-election in Sudbury

Mme France Gélinas	2600
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2600

Infrastructure program funding

Mr. Glenn Thibeault	2601
Hon. Brad Duguid	2601

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. John Yakabuski	2601
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2602

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Percy Hatfield	2602
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2602

Credit unions

Mr. Chris Ballard	2602
Hon. Charles Sousa	2603

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Jim McDonell	2603
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2603

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. John Vanthof	2604
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2604
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2604

Children's treatment centres

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2604
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2605

By-election in Sudbury

Mr. Steve Clark	2605
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	2605

Visitor

Hon. Deborah Matthews	2606
-----------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Taras Natyshak	2606
Mrs. Cristina Martins	2606

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario

Mr. Jim Wilson	2606
----------------------	------

Gasoline prices

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2606
-------------------------	------

Aerospace industry

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	2606
----------------------------	------

Bruce Goulet

Mr. Victor Fedeli	2607
-------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2607
-------------------------------	------

360°kids

Mr. Chris Ballard	2607
-------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Todd Smith	2607
----------------------	------

Epilepsy

Mr. Granville Anderson	2608
------------------------------	------

Orléans Chamber of Commerce / Chambre de commerce d'Orléans

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde	2608
---------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Poet Laureate of Ontario Act, 2015, Bill 71,

Mr. Hatfield / Loi de 2015 sur le poète officiel de l'Ontario, projet de loi 71, M. Hatfield

First reading agreed to	2608
-------------------------------	------

Mr. Percy Hatfield	2608
--------------------------	------

Supply Act, 2015, Bill 72, Ms. Matthews / Loi de crédits de 2015, projet de loi 72, Mme Matthews

First reading agreed to	2608
-------------------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

International Women's Day

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2609
Hon. David Zimmer	2610

Social workers

Hon. Helena Jaczek	2610
--------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Laurie Scott	2611
------------------------	------

Social workers

Mr. Bill Walker	2611
-----------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Peggy Sattler	2612
-------------------------	------

Social workers

Ms. Cindy Forster	2612
-------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Health care

Mr. Bill Walker	2613
-----------------------	------

Taxation

Mr. Jim McDonell	2613
------------------------	------

Alzheimer's disease

Ms. Catherine Fife	2613
--------------------------	------

Legal aid	
Mr. Bob Delaney	2614
Hospital services	
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2614
Hispanic Heritage Month	
Mrs. Cristina Martins.....	2614
Hospice funding	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2614
Forest industry	
Mr. John Vanthof.....	2615
Water fluoridation	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	2615
Winter road maintenance	
Mr. Norm Miller	2615
Student assistance	
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	2615
Credit unions	
Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris.....	2616
Services for the disabled	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2616

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2616
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2617
Mr. Michael Harris	2619
Mr. Jagmeet Singh.....	2620
Mrs. Julia Munro	2621
Mr. John Fraser.....	2622
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	2624
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	2624
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2626
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2627
Hon. James J. Bradley	2628
Motion negatived.....	2628

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 4 March 2015 / Mercredi 4 mars 2015

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Agriculture Insurance Act (Amending the Crop Insurance Act, 1996), 2015, Bill 40, Mr. Leal / Loi de 2015 sur l'assurance agricole (modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'assurance-récolte), projet de loi 40, M. Leal	
Hon. David Zimmer	2583
Mr. Glenn Thibeault	2584
Mrs. Laura Albanese	2584
Mr. Rick Nicholls	2584
Mr. John Vanthof	2585
Mr. Granville Anderson	2585
Mr. Steve Clark	2585
Hon. David Zimmer	2585
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2586
Mr. John Vanthof	2587
Mrs. Cristina Martins	2587
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	2588
Mr. Michael Mantha	2588
Mr. Victor Fedeli	2588
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2588
Hon. David Oraziatti	2590
Mr. Jack MacLaren	2590
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	2590
Hon. James J. Bradley	2591
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2591
Mr. Jeff Yurek	2591
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2593

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Todd Smith	2593
Mr. John Vanthof	2593
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2593
Mr. Jim Wilson	2593
Mr. Wayne Gates	2593
Hon. Bill Mauro	2593
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	2593
Mr. Taras Natyshak	2594
Hon. James J. Bradley	2594
Mr. Robert Bailey	2594
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2594
Mrs. Laura Albanese	2594
Ms. Laurie Scott	2594
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	2594

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris	2594
Mr. Toby Barrett	2594
Mr. Yvan Baker	2594
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	2594
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	2594
Mr. Jim McDonell	2594
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	2594
Mr. Percy Hatfield	2594
Hon. Bill Mauro	2594
M. Grant Crack	2594
Ms. Eleanor McMahon	2594
Use of electronic devices in House	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2594
Visitor	
Hon. David Zimmer	2595

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2595
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2595
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2595
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2596
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2596
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2596
By-election in Sudbury	
Ms. Andrea Horwath	2597
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2597
Government accountability	
Mr. Randy Hillier	2597
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2598
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2598
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2598
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2598
First responders	
Ms. Soo Wong	2599
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2599
By-election in Sudbury	
Mr. Toby Barrett	2600
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2600
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2600

Continued on inside back cover

